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# PC PowerPlay



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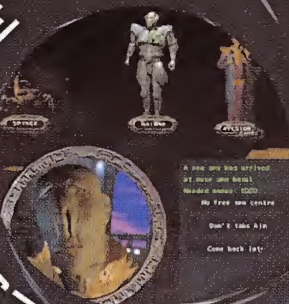
EXPLORATION



BATTLES



ESPIONAGE



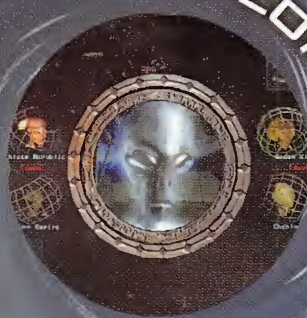
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# PC PowerPlay CONTENTS

ISSUE 47 APRIL 2000



## PCPP PC POWERPLAY GAME ~ of the ~ YEAR

### 28 GAME OF THE YEAR AWARDS

The votes are in. We counted them all. And the Game of the Year award goes to (*Snip! - Ed*)...



### 50 QUAKE III VS UNREAL TOURNAMENT

We grilled our resident office experts over this burning issue and here's the result.

#### 9 Editorial

Good god, there's a strange man on the editorial page.

#### NEWS

##### 10 Spotlight

First look at the new Star Wars game, Dark Reign 2 and Baldur's Gate 2 updates, plus the ever popular Australia's Most Wanted poll. All new, improved formula!

##### 20 Net Game News

Find out what Black & White is doing online in the revamped NGN. Added lemon freshness!

##### 24 News Feature

What do we really think about computer games?

#### PREVIEWS

##### 32 Thief II: The Metal Age

Garrett's back.

##### 36 Force Commander

Old school Star Wars.

##### 40 Rune

Medieval madness.

##### 44 Silent Hunter II

Down periscope.

##### 46 Soldier of Fortune

'Armless fun.

#### GAMEPLAY

##### 90 The Oracle Code

The unholy alliance continues.

##### 94 Web Resources

Get the most out of your games.

##### 96 Theme Park World

How to keep your lunch down on the big dipper.

##### 100 GP 500

Ed Fox tells you it's just like riding a bike. Sorry.

#### TECH

##### 104 Tech News

The latest developments in bleeding edge hardware.

##### 106 Tech Feature

We unravel the mysteries of 3D sound technology.

##### 108 Hotware

Cards and chips put under the microscope.

##### 110 Setup

Dr Dan reminds us that PCs are people too.

##### 114 CD Guide

Read this before you play this month's demos. Oh no, too late!

##### 122 Letters

Well, it's certainly an educational experience.

##### 125 Competitions

The happiest page of the month.

##### 126 Diversions

Things to do when the game playing stops.

##### 128 Read Error

Twice the size, but can we be twice as funny? Hmm...

##### 130 Next Month

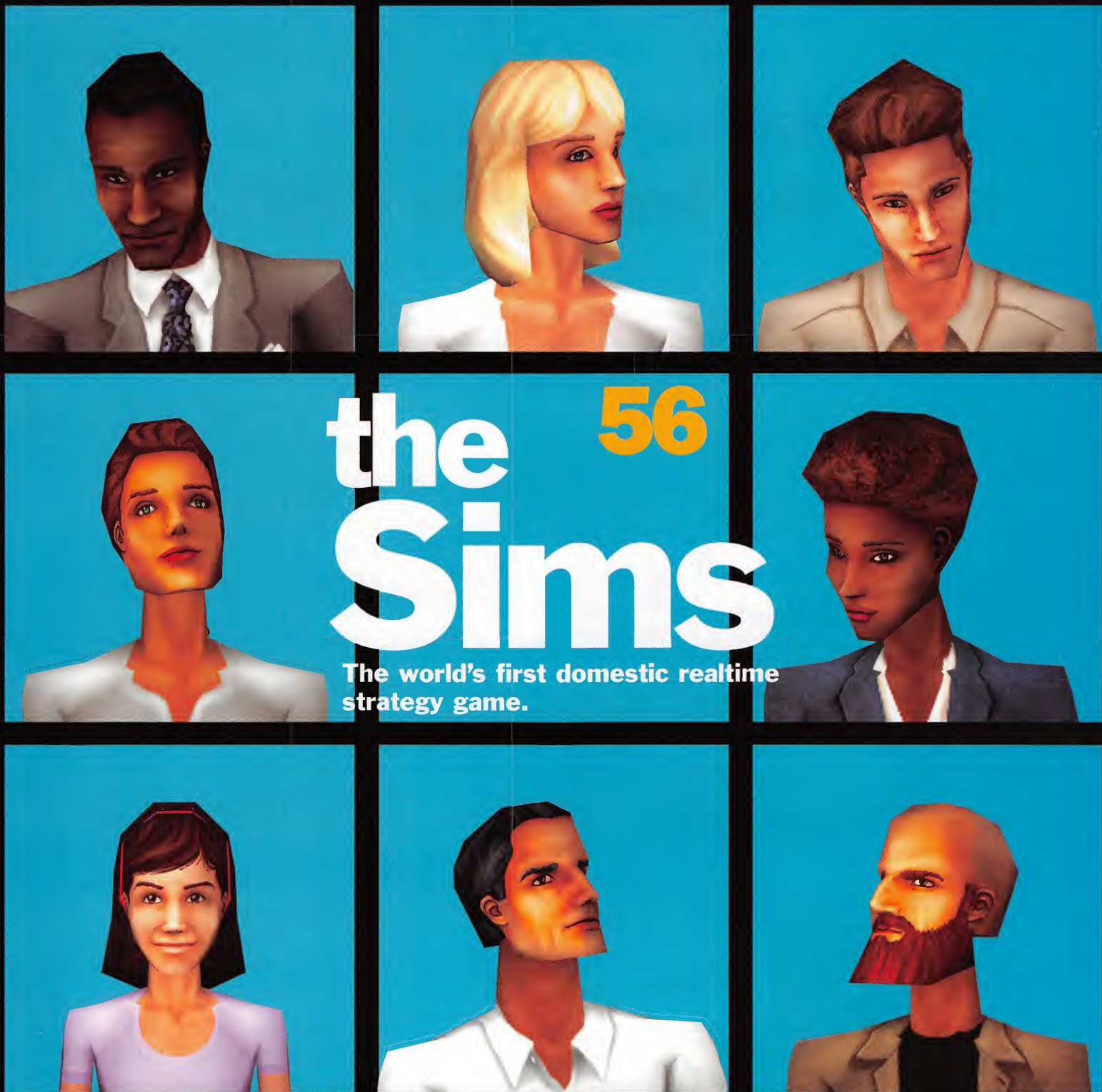
Battlezone 2 will be reviewed next month, promise. But, gee, wouldn't it be funny if we didn't...

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**26** Save a really not insubstantial 33% by letting us send you the mag for a year. Sensible, non?







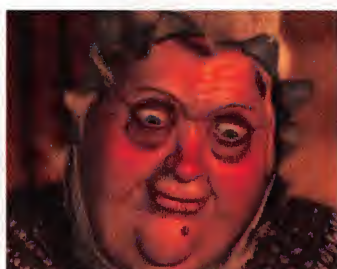
## ISSUE 47 REVIEWS

**56** Review Contents  
**58** The Sims  
**64** Final Fantasy VIII  
**68** Slave Zero

**70** Septerra Core  
**74** Interstate '82  
**76** F/A 18 Hornet  
**78** Pro Pinball: Fantastic

**Journey**  
**80** Descent 3: More tunnels  
**81** Dracula  
**82** South Park Rally

**84** Pandora's Box  
**85** Akuma: Demonspawn  
**86** Gorky 17  
**88** The Score List





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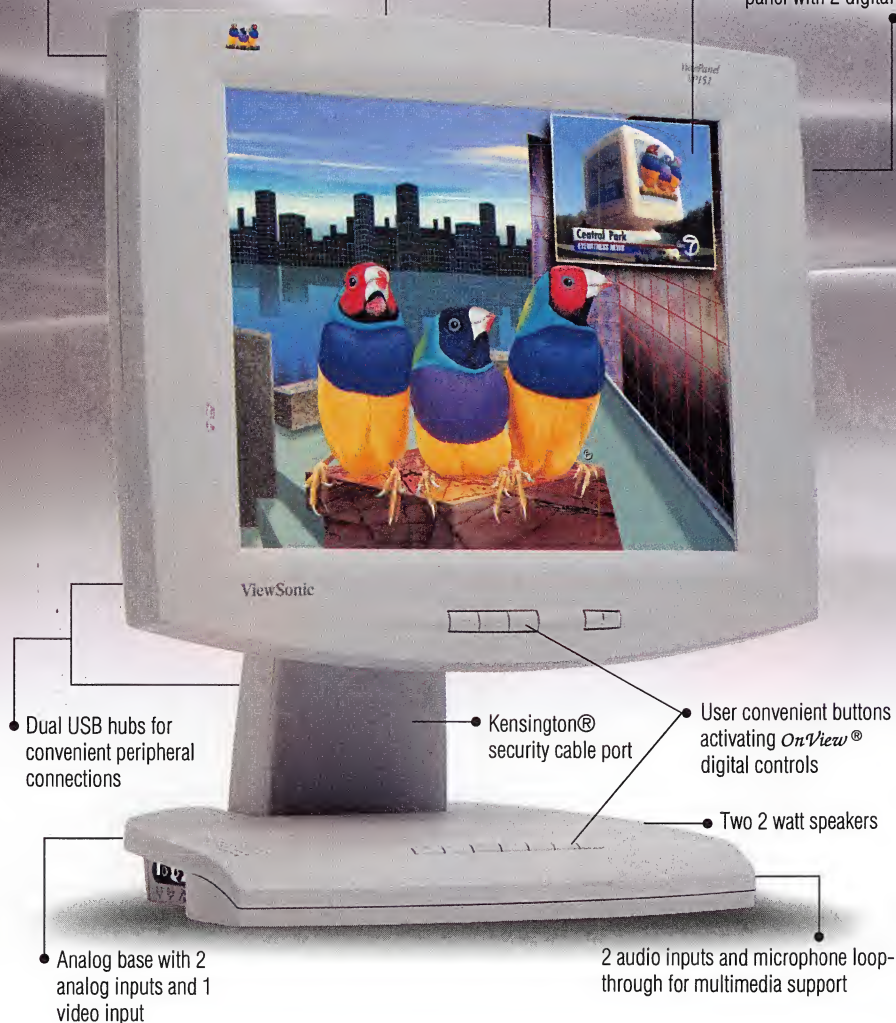
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## Authorized Distributors:

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Editor: Dan Ziffer

[danz@next.com.au](mailto:danz@next.com.au)

Deputy Editor: March Stepnik

[march@next.com.au](mailto:march@next.com.au)

Staff Writer: David Wildgoose

[david@next.com.au](mailto:david@next.com.au)

Art Director: Malcolm Campbell

[malcolm@next.com.au](mailto:malcolm@next.com.au)

Designer: Andrew Rogers

[andrew\\_rogers@next.com.au](mailto:andrew_rogers@next.com.au)

CD Editor: Harry Maragos

[cdtech@pcpowerplay.next.com.au](mailto:cdtech@pcpowerplay.next.com.au)

Contributors: Brett Robinson, John

Dewhurst, Elih Brading, Maj. Des

McNicholas, Edward Fox, Elton Cane,

Timothy C. Best, Kevin Cheung, Hillous

Lesslie, Dan Steadman

Technical Editors: Hugh Norton-Smith,

Daniel Rutter

Photographer: Scott Wajon

Publisher: Jim Flynn

[jim@next.com.au](mailto:jim@next.com.au)

Managing Director: Phillip Keir

[keir@next.com.au](mailto:keir@next.com.au)

Circulation Manager: Karen Day

[karen@next.com.au](mailto:karen@next.com.au)

Advertising Production Co-ordinator:

Dylan Fryer

[dylan@next.com.au](mailto:dylan@next.com.au)

General Enquiries: (02) 9699 0333

Fax: (02) 9310 1315

#### ADVERTISING

Group Advertising Manager:

Anthony Hennessy

[anthony@next.com.au](mailto:anthony@next.com.au)

Advertising Manager: Gill Oliver

[gill@next.com.au](mailto:gill@next.com.au)

Production Co-ordinator: Peta Hatton

[peta@next.com.au](mailto:peta@next.com.au)

Production Manager: Melissa Doyle

[melissa@next.com.au](mailto:melissa@next.com.au)

Finance Director: Theo Fatseas

[theo@next.com.au](mailto:theo@next.com.au)

#### SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES:

Phone: 1300 36 11 46

e-mail: [subs@next.com.au](mailto:subs@next.com.au)

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Write to PC PowerPlay at:

418a Elizabeth St, Surry Hills,

NSW 2010, Australia

E-mail: [pcpowerplay@next.com.au](mailto:pcpowerplay@next.com.au)

Fax: 02 9310 1315

CD tech support:

[cdtech@pcpowerplay.next.com.au](mailto:cdtech@pcpowerplay.next.com.au)

Oracle: [oracle@pcpowerplay.next.com.au](mailto:oracle@pcpowerplay.next.com.au)

Setup: [setup@pcpowerplay.next.com.au](mailto:setup@pcpowerplay.next.com.au)

Letters: [letters@pcpowerplay.next.com.au](mailto:letters@pcpowerplay.next.com.au)

What we're playing:

Dan: Quake III, Soldier of Fortune, The Sims, Foo

Fighters, Alex Lloyd, Armarid Van Helden

March: Airport Inc, Quake III, The Sims, Mogwai.

David: Planescape Torment, System Shock 2,

Asian Dub Foundation.

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In memory of Malcolm Campbell, Snr. 1941-2000

## HI, I'M THE NEW GUY.



It's always a strange experience moving to a new city. I've never really had to do it before, so I'm starting to understand how it felt for all those kids at my close-to-the-RAAF-base school. The fleeting rookph visions of unfamiliar landscapes, the alien faces of TV newsreaders, the second language of acronyms and phrases, the bizarre geography ... it all serves to disorientate you into a category best described as 'lost bumpkin'. And so here I am (after five years in Melbourne) in what is incessantly referred to as 'the Olympic City'. I'm not completely naïve in my new surroundings - I've already bought ten mattresses so that I can rent out my lounge room in September - but I am a little lost.

Which makes a game like the Sims so damn intriguing. You start off in a new house with no friends, no furniture and no job. You have to find a job, furnish your house, make friends and go to the toilet before your bladder explodes. You can chat, dance and flirt, you can go outside and shoot some hoops, you can take a cat-nap in the middle of the day or stay up until 4AM watching Letterman. Some many choices, all of which affect you health and happiness. Work on your friendships to feel more social, or read a book to increase your knowledge. Be responsible and tidy, or act so badly that your housemates move out. It's all about the choices.

Apparently you have almost complete control of your character. You can manipulate everything that touches your life, as well as your responses and how people feel about you. You have the ability to make yourself as happy and fulfilled as you want to be.

I've just got to work out if this is true in the game as well. I can't wait.

Dan Ziffer  
Editor



# ● ● spotlight

**HEADLINES:** Dark Reign II • Shogun • Obi Wan • Baldur's Gate II • Black & White • Theocracy • Tiberian Sun Firestorm • Allegiance • Project IGI • And more!

## GAME OF THE YEAR Half-Life Cleans Up!



Half-Life: surely someone, somewhere, doesn't like it?



### MORE VALVE

In related Valve happenings, the Half-Life guys have announced the development of a funky new internet gaming protocol designed to remove the hassles from playing online. Cleverly, it's called PowerPlay. You can read more about it in the new-look NGN on p22.

In a coup that will astound even the most jaded gamer, Valve Studios masterpiece Half-Life walked away from the PC PowerPlay Game of The Year awards for 1999 with an incredible eight awards. The much-lauded shooter was popular across the spectrum of voters, and took awards ranging from Game of The Year 1999 to Best Enemy. Speaking from his luxury retreat in the Bahamas, the hero of Half-Life, Gordon Freeman, was in a jovial mood when we contacted him. "Wow! I can't believe we did so well... I'm incredibly pleased", he said. When pushed, Mr. Freeman admitted that he had settled down since the conclusion of Half-Life, and was pursuing a new career. "It was so long ago", he said,

"that it feels like a bad dream. It's a bit of a change from my new job, painting the faces of porcelain dolls". While in good spirits, and acknowledging that many people wanted him to return to the Black Mesa Labs, he had these parting words. "Thanks so much for your kind awards, and for all the letters and cards. But I really like what I'm doing now, although I can't help but feel there is something bad around the corner...". Frankly, we don't know who to congratulate more - Valve for creating such an epic masterpiece or our readers on having such impeccable taste. However, the scope of the win is hard to comprehend. Half-Life was eligible in twelve categories, and took out a massive eight of them (G.O.T.Y, Best

Intro, Best Storyline, Best Music, Best Sound FX, Most Impressive AI, Best Enemy, Best FPS), coming in as a runner-up for Most Original, and third place for Best Interface and Best Multiplayer Shooter.

In excess of 1500 emails, and over 300 tear-outs were tallied to collate the results - in which Microsoft's world-building Age of Empires 2 and Looking Glass's nail-biting System Shock 2 were the other big winners. The Quake 3: Arena vs. Unreal Tournament war of words continued, with Q3A out-polling UT in a majority of their categories.

**The full results of the Game Of The Year poll start on p 28!**



## NEW SHOTS!

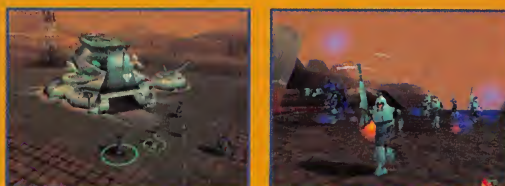
# Dark Reign II



• Genre: 3D RTS • Developer: Pandemic Studios  
• Due: Mid 2000

While Pandemic remain as tight-lipped as ever about the specifics of Dark Reign 2's new and improved 3D RTS gameplay, they're ever so eager to release gorgeous looking screenshots to the ravenous masses. In the latest round of screenshots, we see more of the Jovian Detention Authority and the Sprawlers, the two warring factions in this prequel to the war between the Imperium and Freedom Guards (as seen in the first Dark Reign). Less abrasive than the units of the first DR, DR2's combatants have a stronger anime look about them, with what our fellow colleagues of the N64 Gamer mag call "shameless rip-offs of Jet Force Gemini".

Whatever, Dark Reign 2 surely does look a treat, and should tickle your traditional RTS sensibilities sometime this winter.



We're surely not the only ones who keep reading the JDA as the Jovial Detention Authority?

# Episode 1 Mk.II

THE RETURN OF DARK FORCES

It was with much profound pleasure that we brought to you the announcement of a sequel (of sorts) to Dark Forces 2: Jedi Knight back in the August edition of PC PowerPlay (PCPP #39) - after all, the adventures of Kyle Kattarn continue to be held in the highest regard amongst the PCPP collective. Titled Episode 1: Obi Wan and set during the events featured in The Phantom Menace movie, the game's main allure was the continuation of the legacy of this outstanding action series.

Eight months later and little more is known about the

project, save that Obi Wan will not be controlled in the first person, but in the third (much like LucasArts action adventure title - Episode I: The Phantom Menace).

Given the similarities between early screenshots and the in-game perspective used in Obi Wan and the rather dubiously received Episode I: The Phantom Menace, there's a growing concern that Obi Wan may be abandoning its Dark Forces roots.

Episode I: Obi Wan has been lightly pencilled in for a late 2000 release. Expect a full preview in PCPP soon.



"Behind you!" - Ah, will the appeal of that caption never die.



## AVP GOLD

Electronic Arts will soon be reissuing its highly-acclaimed action game Aliens Vs Predator (96% PCPP#37). To be labelled the AvP Gamer's Edition, the re-release will include the full game (including the save game patch), an add-on pack entitled Millennium, and the official strategy guide. Should be in stores around April.

## LUCAS LOSES 2

Two longtime LucasArts chaps, Jack Sorensen and Tim Schafer, have both left the company. Of former Lucas President Sorensen's contribution, George Lucas was full of praise: "Jack shaped the company's strategic direction and I credit him with building LucasArts into one of the world's leading developers and publishers." No word as yet as to his future plans. Schafer, veteran game designer and the creator of Grim Fandango and Full Throttle, has reputedly left to helm a start-up development team with the programmer of LucasArts' SCUMM game engine, Aric Wilmunder. Will this mark the end of the traditional LucasArts adventure game? And what about the much-rumoured Monkey Island 4? It would be a tragedy if The Phantom Menace turned out to be their last ever adventure.



**AMEN & GOODNIGHT**

Amen: The Awakening has been cancelled. Cavedog's much troubled firstperson shooter has finally been allowed to die peacefully, as the creators of Total Annihilation restructure their development to concentrate on establishing their core franchises, TA and the online Boneyards.

**CLARIFICATION**

In PCPP#46, we reported that Hasbro had sacked 2000 people. This figure included many employees from its toy production, whilst the two games studios that have been shut down employed less than 100 people. The Microprose name is still alive, and will brand upcoming titles in the Grand Prix, B-17 and Gunship series'. However, the future will see Hasbro/Microprose releasing more mainstream strategy and simulation titles.

WARNING! Hideous pun below.



## We've Myst You!

WELL, WE HAVEN'T - BUT THEY'RE BACK ANYWAY.

Who would call a game Mudpie? Really, it's just asking for trouble. You can imagine game critics worldwide lining up to tail their previews with hilarious comments like "Mudpie looks like shit." Not that we'd ever stoop so low. It's perhaps fortunate then, that Cyan has merely chosen Mudpie as the codename for its next game.

When you've created two of the biggest selling games of all time, you can afford to take your time over future projects. After Myst and Riven, Cyan has done exactly that. Mudpie has already been over a year in development, and it's unlikely to see release until next year at the earliest. Concrete information on the title is obviously scarce at present; when you're as successful as the Miller brothers, you also tend to keep things quite close to your chest. We can tell you, though, that it will be their first ever 3D game and that some sort of online capacity will feature prominently. Myst fans, meanwhile, can feel rest assured that Cyan won't be abandoning the non-violent, exploratory atmosphere that made their previous games so popular and so unique.

But they really must come up with another name - and quick!

**PCPP NOW ONLINE****AND IT'S ABOUT BLOODY TIME, TOO**

In January, we brought you the news regarding PC PowerPlay's first ever website. Well, it's taken a few months to iron out all the technical creases, but the time has finally arrived. PCPP has entered cyberspace. As of now, you can hop online, open up your preferred browser, type in [www.pcpowerplay.com.au](http://www.pcpowerplay.com.au) and... well, you won't see an error message any more. As part of the enormous Network Next games network, our site will bring you the latest game news on a daily basis, plus all the most recent patches and demos for your favourite games. There are forums for you guys to discuss the crucial issues affecting the games industry today, as well as sections devoted to previews and reviews from PCPP's legion of talented scribes. And, of course, by going direct to [www.networknext.com](http://www.networknext.com), you can visit the sites of all our lovely sister mags such as N64 Gamer, Australian Station, Hyper and Rolling Stone. Don't worry, it's just like the PCPP you know and love - but on that dang internet thing. See you there.

**FIRST LOOK!****Project IGI**

• Genre: **Military FPS** • Developer: **Innerloop Studios**  
• Due: **3rd Qtr 2000**

Like Elixir Studios' recently announced and highly ambitious strategy game Republic, Project IGI boasts a rather technically astounding game engine. Innerloop claims it is capable of displaying an infinite number of polygons. The trick to this is an infinite degree of scalability, or to put it in simpler terms, being able to zoom the view in and out as far as you wish. The game into which all this graphical power is being directed is a military shooter along the lines of Delta Force or Soldier of Fortune.

As with any military game, realism is a subject of keen attention for the developer. In Project IGI, the detail extends to calculating the precise trajectory of fired bullets, and their effect on any surface depends on its material make-up and angle of entry. A range of vehicles can be piloted as well, with players even choosing how they would like to enter the mission area, be it via parachute jump, ground vehicle, or simply on foot.

Sounds like the perfect thinking man's shooter to us.

**Our hero struggle to aim his helium-filled pistol.**





## LOCAL FOCUS

A NEW REGULAR SERIES WHERE WE PROFILE ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S GAME DEVELOPMENT STUDIOS AND THEIR CURRENT PROJECT.

# Dreamtime Interactive

THIS MONTH: **MICHAEL DE PLATER**, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER OF **SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR**, THE JAPANESE-FLAVOURED REALTIME STRATEGY GAME FROM EA.



A sneak preview of the Olympic opening ceremony.



### PCPP: What's your role at Dreamtime?

**Michael:** My job title is Executive Producer. Basically that means that the buck stops with me. Delivering the project goals in terms of quality and timing is my ultimate responsibility. I also take responsibility for decisions or discussions on creative and gameplay issues. Such issues can be as basic as whether the control key should be use for this or that, all the way up to what kind of game we should do next. It's the best job in the world, but you also have to face up to some tough calls and put your own credibility on the line.

### PCPP: What's Dreamtime's relationship with EA?

**Michael:** Dreamtime is an independent production company. Electronic Arts was a natural partner for us in that they have strength in distribution, manufacturing and large scale marketing. Now we have an ongoing relationship and EA will be key to helping us build Total War into a brand that is well known for bringing the true to life epic scale and authentic tactics into strategy games.

### PCPP: Dreamtime is a really small team. What advantages and disadvantages does this confer?

**Michael:** The main advantage is the ability to make decisions quickly without needing to discuss everything with too many people, but many good larger organizations can do this too. We also enjoy lighter overheads and

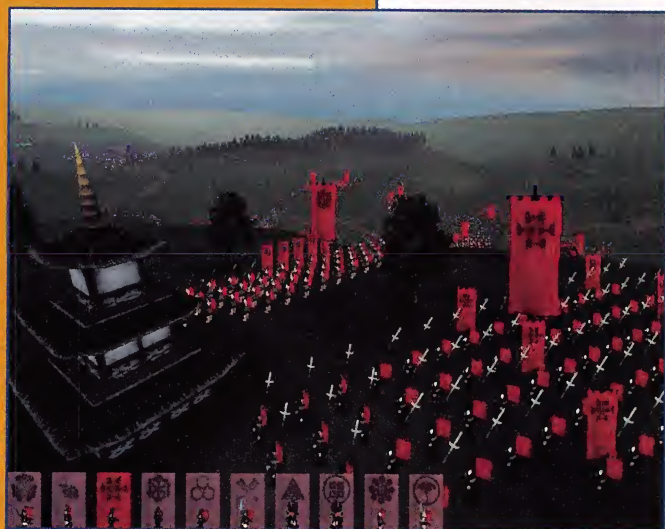
each member of staff gets to do much more and learn more than they would if they were simply doing one task like a cog in a larger machine. I think our team spirit, coordination, morale and ambitions are also much stronger because everybody knows everyone else. I guess, the only disadvantage is simply that we you have an "all hands to the pumps" kind of situation, like the last two weeks of developing a game - you just have less hands than a larger organization.

### PCPP: Can you sum up Shogun in just one sentence?

**Michael:** That's hard because there's so much in it. But here goes - "Samurai Warfare on an epic scale, thousands of warriors in battle, 8 rival factions, intrigue, honour, assassinations, subterfuge, honour and realtime battles on a 3D terrain - all controlled with a

simple point and click... Shogun is TOTAL WAR!" Did I forget anything? I don't think so...

\*We'll have a full preview of Shogun next month.



## CINEMA SEQUELS

"Hi, I'm Cinemaware, you may remember me from late 80s cult games like Defender of the Crown and It Came From the Desert." That's what the press release from the revived games developer, Cinemaware, might have said to announce their return to the PC after a lengthy absence. Expect sequels to several of their better known games.



## AUSTRALIA'S MOST WANTED

Fresh from its vacation to the sunnier climes of the letters page, AMW is back home in Spotlight and... Hang on, nothing's really changed. Team Fortress is still looking down its nose at everyone, Diablo 2 remains second, Deus Ex third, etc, etc. Oh, hello, The Sims has poked its head into eighth place. Shame it's just been released and won't be in next month's chart. Lovely game, though - read the review on p58.

Send your Top Five Most Wanted Games to: [wanted@pcpowerplay.next.com.au](mailto:wanted@pcpowerplay.next.com.au)



This month's winner is **David Ward from Hamilton, QLD**. He's a fan of Black & White. Which certainly gets our approval. We'll see if we can wrangle a copy out of EA when it's released.

1	TEAM FORTRESS 2	◀
2	Diablo 2	◀
3	Deus Ex	◀
4	Warcraft 3	◀
5	Duke Nukem Forever	◀
6	Thief 2	◀
7	Halo	◀
8	The Sims	◀
9	Messiah	◀
10	Baldur's Gate 2	◀





# Outta Space

THAT'S **O.R.B.** NOT ORBB

It's true that strategy had been set in space long before Homeworld came along, so perhaps we should view Strategy First's O.R.B. as more the latest in a long tradition rather than a shameless clone. O.R.B. is 3D realtime strategy, then, situated in space and designed to take advantage of the boundless freedom this setting offers. You build your base, construct some spacecraft, research better technologies and equip your fleet with more powerful weapons - you should know the drill by now.

Having said that, the developers have

added a few elements that divert O.R.B. from the usual formula. Unlike Homeworld, there are two races to play as: the slow but powerful Malus or the weaker but more agile Alyssian. Other features include the capacity to establish temporary bases on asteroids to expand your territory of control and the option of carrying over experienced units who survive from one mission to the next.

O.R.B. is presently scheduled to re-enter the Earth's atmosphere around the third quarter of this year.

## NEW SHOTS!

# Theocracy

• Genre: RTS • Developer: Philos Labs  
• Due: 2nd Qtr 2000

The Aztec empire was righteously enjoying a golden age when masses of silly Spaniards landed and turfed 'em all out - in a rather brutal manner it must be said. With Theocracy, developer Philos Labs has given gamers the satisfying option of re-writing history and having the Aztecs emerge the victors.

Now before you turn the page in disgust at the thought of having to sit through another history lesson thinly veiled as a game, this realtime strategy effort is looking a treat indeed. Think Age of Empires meets Civilization. Most intriguing is Theocracy's game structure, which does away with the conventional mission-based flavour of most RTS games. Philos Labs claim that whilst players go about resource gathering, force management and the like, major advancements only occur when the player meets particular game conditions. Also of note is the introduction of magical spells and abilities to the Aztecs (complete with impressive pyrotechnic displays attached), which should liven up the battlefield a bit.



Never trust a real estate agent

## CAPITAL UFS

Rogue Spear creators Red Storm Entertainment continue to steer a course away from military shooters following last month's acquisition of the rights to Anne MacCaffrey's Freedom novels. This month they've announced another new game, entitled U.F.S. Vanguard, that places the player in command of a bloody big spaceship, or capital ship as it's commonly called.

## WEREWOLF NOT DEAD

Contrary to reports you may have read elsewhere, Werewolf: The Apocalypse developer and publisher ASC Games has not closed down. According to a spokesperson, the company has "downsized" some operations, but all development on current projects will continue. Still, full moon fans can expect to be howling a little later than predicted.

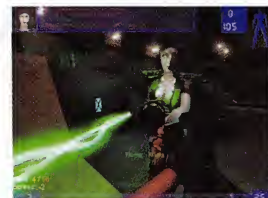
# Next-Gen Roleplaying

EPIC GRANT **UNREAL TOURNAMENT** LICENSE

A science fiction roleplaying game utilising the Unreal code? No, it's not Deus Ex. Gold Creek Technology, headed up by Paul Schuytema, who many of you will know from his work on the Prey engine at Epic Games, has licensed the Unreal Tournament engine to power a game called Second Genesis. Schuytema's experience at Epic meant that there was only one engine to go with. "I've had the privilege to witness the growth of the Unreal tech from its first incarnations in the mid 90s to the rock-solid 3D engine that now powers Epic's Unreal Tournament," he explained. "Needless to

say, we're very excited to have that powerhouse engine under the hood of Second Genesis. It will allow us to truly create an immersive game experience."

Being an RPG, you can expect a range of characters to play, and with soldier, mercenary, and even pimp and good Samaritan character classes to choose from, Second Genesis won't disappoint here. Martial arts feature heavily, while the multiplayer aspect won't be neglected either - gladiatorial bouts in online arenas are promised. Sounds intriguing, but the release date is still miles off. Think late next year.



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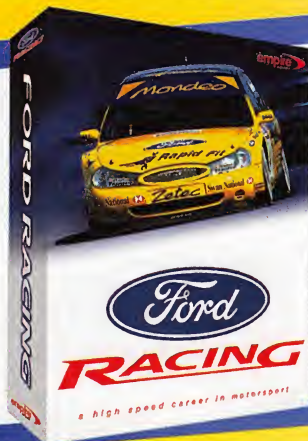
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## WITCHING TIME

Finally, the line-up for the three-strong series of Blair Witch games can be confirmed. First up in August is Terminal Reality's *The Blair Witch Project: The Nocturne Chronicles*, which is set in 1941. Following a month later is Human Head's take on the film, stepping five decades further back in time. The third title from Ritual is due in October and depicts events circa 1785. Publisher Gathering of Developers is going to be very busy over the next few months.

## X-COM'S GENESIS

Mythos Games, the developer of the original X-Com game (also known as *UFO: Enemy Unknown*), is set to return with a new title that sounds strangely familiar. Does turn-based and squad-based tactical combat against disgusting alien creatures ring any bells? Yep, it's X-Com alright. Only it will be called *Dreamland* because Hasbro own the rights of the X-Com name.

## MoonQuaker

EA SIGN UP Q3A FOR JAMES BOND 007 GAME

Can you imagine Klesk dressing in a dapper tuxedo? Maybe Phobos indulging in a little sexual innuendo with Lucy? Or Hossman asking for his drink shaken, not stirred? These are the rather alarming images brought to mind by the news that Electronic Arts have licensed the Quake III: Arena engine for use in an upcoming James Bond game. Based on the recent Bond film *The World Is Not Enough*, it's thought that the increased polygonal count of Q3 was needed to model the likes of Denise Richards and Sophie Marceau. Possibly. The game promises to mix high action setpieces with a significant amount of character and environment interaction. After American McGee's *Alice*, this also marks EA's second venture into building upon id Software's powerful 3D engine. You can expect to be playing *The World Is Not Enough* around Christmas 2000.



## PCPP DIARY

**MARCH 10-12**  
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA  
**GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE**

The annual show, now in its 14th year, is a vital forum for game developers worldwide. Speakers this year include **Peter Molyneux** (Black & White), **Toby Gard** and **Paul Douglas** (Galleon), **Cliff Bleszinski** (Unreal Tournament), **Marc Le Blanc** (Thief), **Dave Perry** (Messiah) and **Demis Hassabis** (Republic), as well as Sega luminaries **Yu Suzuki** and **Yuji Naka**. Rumours abound that Microsoft might actually make an announcement about the much-vaunted X-Box. Though, we're betting that'll occur two weeks earlier at their own Gamestock.

The winners of the Independent Games Festival will also be awarded.

## NEW SHOTS!

## Baldur's Gate II: The Shadows of Amn

• Genre: RPG • Developer: Bioware/Black Isle Studios • Due: 3rd Qtr 2000

The development of *Baldur's Gate II: The Shadows of Amn* continues to steam ahead, on track for a pre-X'mas 2000 release. In a recent update, Black Isle studios revealed a taste of what fans can expect of the story. Picking up where the original *Baldur's Gate* finishes off after defeating the... (Right! Enough! - Ed.), *The Shadows of Amn* sees your character playing a far more pivotal - and political - role in the prophecy of which you are at the very centre. BG2's producers claim that the scope of this highly anticipated sequel is far greater than the original, and the types of situations players will find themselves in will be more varied.

Fans of the *Forgotten Realms* campaign set of AD&D will be well pleased to know that BG2 includes such locations as the trading city of Athkatla, Underdark, the Abyss and the Astral



With the addition of 3D accellerators, BG2's spekl effects are a pure delight.

plane. For the uninitiated, this means that BG2 will feature a far greater variety of geographical locations than the first.

Black Isle have also revealed more of the strongholds that will be made available during the course of the game. Once acquired, these strongholds provide a safe haven for party members and loot, generate income, and most importantly, will provide quests for players. It's not a light responsibility though - failure to adequately maintain your stronghold may eventuate in a speedy eviction.





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## SIM SPACE STATION

UK development team Mucky Foot Productions have announced their second title after the acclaimed Urban Chaos (85% PCPP#46). Drawing on several of the team's experience at Bullfrog with Theme Park and Theme Hospital, the new game has the player assume management responsibilities on a space station. Already midway through development, Space Station (as it's tentatively called) could be seen in our skies by the end of the year.

## FIRST LOOK!

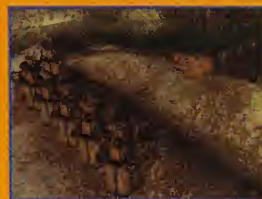
## Earth 2150

• Genre: Realtime Strategy • Developer: Topware  
• Due: 2nd Qtr 2000

Last month we reported that a sequel to the much underrated RTS Earth 2140 was in development. Now we can not only inform you that Mattel Interactive will publish the game worldwide, but also show off the first ever screenshots of the title. Subtitled Escape from the Blue Planet, Earth 2150 is a very nice looking excursion into the increasingly well-populated realm of 3D strategy. One area where Topware seem intent to assert their individuality is the dynamic environment. Weather effects are prominent - storms of the rain, snow and meteor variety will be on hand to throw a climatological spanner in the works - while trenches and tunnels can be used to alter the terrain to your advantage.

Earth 2150 could even challenge Dark Reign 2 in a few months time.

When all else fails, blow a hole in the ground and hide in it.



## TYCOON TWO

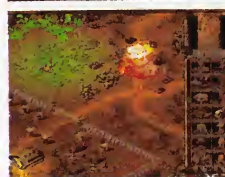
Ubisoft gave us a sneak peek this month of the latest two additions to the diverse Tycoon franchise. Though related in name only to the likes of Hasbro's Rollercoaster and Transport iterations, the forthcoming Wall Street Tycoon and Business Tycoon delve into similar levels of economic complexity. Expect a release for both in the next few months.

## Twin Sun on Fire

THE FACTS ON THE FIRST TIB SUN EXPANSION PACK

We've managed to get hold of a couple of shots from the forthcoming C&C: Tiberian Sun addon, subtitled Firestorm. And here they are, presented in their full technicolour glory. Oh, you'd like some information as well? Well, there's a range of new units, of course. With few conventional offensive units among the additions, it's left to contraptions such as the Mobile War Factory or Mobile Stealth Generator to expand upon the somewhat limited tactical arena of Tiberian Sun. The Tiberian Floater is a new neutral enemy, designed to menace both NOD and GDI troops alike. New GDI and NOD campaigns are on offer, with nine missions in each. Also promised is Global Domination, an online game that bears a passing similarity to Cavedog's Boneyards.

You'll be able to find out just how similar when it's released any day now. Review next month.



But, hang on, where's James Earl Jones?

## COMING SOON

PCPP'S ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO WHAT YOU'LL BE PLAYING IN THE MONTHS AHEAD. JUST MAKE SURE YOU'VE GOT THE GRAIN OF SALT READY, OKAY?

MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	AND BEYOND...	WHO KNOWS?
<b>Battlezone 2</b> (Activision) <b>Majesty: Sovereign of Arдания</b> (Hasbro) <b>Nox</b> (Electronic Arts) <b>Soldier of Fortune</b> (Activision) <b>Thief 2: The Metal Age</b> (Eidos)	<b>B-17 2: The Mighty Eighth</b> (Hasbro) <b>Black &amp; White</b> (Electronic Arts) <b>Colin McRae Rally 2</b> (Eidos) <b>Deus Ex</b> (Eidos) <b>Star Wars: Force Commander</b> (Lucasarts) <b>Vampire</b> (Activision)	<b>Diablo 2</b> (Sierra) <b>Giants: Citizen Kabuto</b> (Interplay) <b>Grand Prix 3</b> (Hasbro) <b>Icewind Dale</b> (Interplay)	<b>Anachronox</b> (Eidos) <b>Motocross Madness 2</b> (Microsoft) <b>Starlancer</b> (Microsoft) <b>X-Com: Alliance</b> (Hasbro)	<b>Baldur's Gate 2: Shadows of Amn</b> (Interplay) <b>Dark Reign 2</b> (Activision) <b>Halo</b> (Bungie) <b>Team Fortress 2</b> (Sierra)	<b>Daikatana</b> (Eidos) <b>C&amp;C: Renegade</b> (Electronic Arts) <b>Episode One: Obi-Wan</b> (Lucasarts) <b>Duke Nukem Forever</b> (GT Interactive) <b>Freelancer</b> (Microsoft) <b>Tribes 2</b> (Sierra) <b>Warcraft 3</b> (Sierra)



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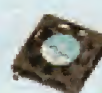
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# net.game.news



Sure, the turtle's cool, but our fave B+W character is definitely the cow.

## Tribal Gathering

LIONHEAD UNVEILS **BLACK & WHITE'S** INITIAL ONLINE COMPONENT

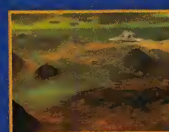
[www.lionhead.co.uk](http://www.lionhead.co.uk)

For the duration of its development, Lionhead's intriguing strategy game **Black & White** has promised a rather singular take on the now essential multiplayer experience. But quite what this would entail has remained a bit of a mystery. The first details are finally beginning to emerge, and as a result our interest is only growing stronger.

The actual release date for **Black & White** is still shrouded in secrecy, but some couple of months prior to that date we'll get our first chance to sample at least a small portion of the game in the form of **The Gathering**. Measuring at an easy 10MB download, this online-only sneak preview will differ from the usual game demo in several significant ways. Players logging onto the servers dedicated to **The Gathering** will select a creature to control from a field of nine, all of whom will feature in the final game. You can then lead your creature through a number of different zones across the persistent online world that Lionhead has created. In these, players will learn how to fight and cast spells and generally get to grips with the innovative gesture-based interface. And while this is happening, your creature is learning behaviour and abilities that can be carried over into the final game.

Perhaps the most original aspect of **The Gathering**, however, is its connection with internet chat program ICQ. Each player's ICQ contact list can be displayed on top of **The Gathering** while the game is in progress, allowing you to talk with friends via their **Black & White** creature avatars. Later, voice over the internet technology should hopefully mean that when you speak your creature's lips also move in sync with your words.

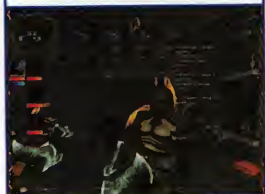
We'll be bringing you more info on **Black & White** in an indepth preview very soon.



### DUNGEONEER

[www.artifact-entertainment.com](http://www.artifact-entertainment.com)

**Demise: Rise of the Ku'Tan** is a 3D roleplaying game where you gather together a party of adventurers to explore the depths of the city of Dejenol. **Demise** includes a multiplayer mode and an intriguing autosave feature that prohibits reloads, thus forcing the player to deal with the consequences of their every action. At this stage it's only available online, which is why you're reading about it here. Clever, huh?





# Allegiance

IT'S SPACE COMBAT TIME. BRING YOUR FRIENDS!

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[www.microsoft.com/games/allegiance](http://www.microsoft.com/games/allegiance)

Currently undergoing an open Beta test, Microsoft's Allegiance is the next in their burgeoning lineup of massively multiplayer titles. It combines elements of space combat and realtime strategy into what could potentially become one of this year's most enjoyable and addictive MM games. The game's visuals are surprisingly crisp, bordering on spectacular, but it is Allegiance's frenetic gameplay that accounts for its already impressive user base.

Set in the future immediately following the Earth's untimely demise at the hands of a particularly large asteroid, Allegiance features three factions: the Bio, genetically engineered humans striving to enforce their ideals on those untouched by the geneticist's pipette; the Iron Coalition, a

merchant consortium committed to the principles of economics and trade; and GigaCorp, a malevolent conglomerate devoted solely to the acquisition and utilisation of valuable resources.

Like Asheron's Call, Allegiance is geared toward cooperative gameplay. In fact, survival as a lone gunman in Allegiance is nigh on impossible. Instead, players must polarise into large groups at the game's outset, donating the wages accrued for their services to a hastily elected Commander. The RTS component of Allegiance hinges on the rapid acquisition of resources and advanced technologies, and construction of more advanced spacecraft. This is achieved through the Commander, who is entrusted with the responsibilities of resource collection, technological research and

construction of units and structures.

A chain of command running from the Commander down to the pilot also exists, enabling the player to adopt a wide variety of duties from Space Station Captain through to Capital Ship Pod Gunner. The ships themselves range from agile Scouts armed exclusively with powerful sensors, to run-of-the-mill Fighters, Stealth Fighters, Interceptors, Bombers and Capital Ships. While single players pilot smaller craft, larger vessels like Bombers and Capital Ships are operated by crews comprised of several players acting in concert to achieve specific goals. This further emphasis on team coordination adds greatly to the feelings of unity and camaraderie that pervade battles within Allegiance.

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THE **NEED FOR SPEED** SERIES GOES ONLINE

[www.needforspeed.com/motorcity](http://www.needforspeed.com/motorcity)

Electronic Arts' venerable arcade racing franchise has been in need of a fresh lick of paint for quite some time now. The latest iteration might provide just that. Need For Speed: Motor City is an online-only racing venture that whisks willing drivers back to the beginnings of motorsport last century. Classic gas-guzzling "Yank tanks" are the vehicles of choice for the discerning 1930s petrolhead, with beasts from Ford, Chevy, Dodge and Pontiac all parked in the garage. Players will be able to purchase new cars, customise and tinker with them, sell them secondhand to rivals, and race them through the streets of Motor City to win cash and prestige. EA is anticipating a release during third quarter this year.

Need For Speed is going all 'Happy Days'. Check out the diner!



### NGN TOP 5 ONLINE GAMES

1. Unreal Tournament
2. Quake III Arena
3. Half-Life
4. Everquest
5. Tribes



Send your votes to  
[ngn@pcpowerplay.com.au](mailto:ngn@pcpowerplay.com.au)



## BEAT THE TIGER

[www.playagainstthepros.com](http://www.playagainstthepros.com)

Virtual golfers are being given the opportunity to match strokes with the world's best professional players in a new venture from EA Sports. Owners of Tiger Woods PGA Tour Golf can "play against the pros" in realtime during actual PGA tournaments. The first event was held between Feb 3-6, while the next occurs from March 23-26 with others to follow throughout the year.

## Game Developers Love PowerPlay

[www.powerplayinfo.com](http://www.powerplayinfo.com)

A joint initiative by Cisco (internet hardware suppliers) and Valve Software (the folks behind PCPP's Game Of The Year - Half-Life), PowerPlay is basically a set of hardware and software standards being developed to help extract the best performance possible (ie. a massive speed increase) from the internet for multiplayer gaming. Gabe Newell, head of Valve and a spokesperson for PowerPlay, explains that the venture is about fine tuning network code, both in game software and on the server side of an ISP to ensure smoother and faster connections to online game servers. To help achieve this standard, PowerPlay has called for help from the entire gaming and IT industry to band together to work towards a solution. Already there has been much interest from leading game developers. Work has already begun on PowerPlay version 2.0.

PowerPlay version 1.0 is currently in beta and is scheduled to hit the gaming masses before May. More news on local support of this exciting development soon.



## Ultima Online - Oceania Edition

[www.uo.com](http://www.uo.com)

After much ballyhoo, deliberation and false starts (and not forgetting an absolutely HUGE petition organised by the folks at the Australian Ultima Online Shard Appeal - <http://auosa.qgl.org/>), Australia finally has its own Ultima Online server! Sing praise and rejoice! Going live on the 1st of February, the server was finally named Oceania thanks to a competition run at AUOSA. Based in Sydney, this UO game server (which can support up to 5000 simultaneous players) offers much improved connectivity speeds (the reduction in internet hops required to reach the shard) and reduces lag, finally giving local users a much more stable experience.

Offered as an exclusive to local residents, Oceania will be made accessible to the rest of the world only after 2 months of service. To coincide with this monumental event, EA Australia has released the Ultima Online Discovery Edition, which gives includes UO: The Second Age, a game manual, a collectors pendant, a copy of the UO Ascension demo and one month's game time to get you started.



## FIENDISH PUZZLES

[www.fiendishgames.com](http://www.fiendishgames.com)

Puzzle games are not usually renowned for their visual splendour, typically restricted as they are to functional geometric shapes with the odd pretty backdrop. Fiendish Games believe they can change this perception with Tower of the Ancients, a 3D puzzler inspired by the classic colour-matching gameplay of Columns. Bump-mapping, motion blur, fractal lighting, and other techy things are expected to distract you from the task at hand.

## REWRITE HISTORY

[zone.msn.com/fightertace](http://zone.msn.com/fightertace)

In January, Microsoft's Gaming Zone played host to the initial Fighter Ace 2 semi-historical battle. Nearly 1,000 virtual pilots took a trip back in time to 1943 to recreate the US air raids on Schweinfurt and Regensburg in Nazi Germany. Like the first, all future historical events will only be open to registered Zone users.

## NGN Poll

Email your responses to [ngn@pcpowerplay.next.com.au](mailto:ngn@pcpowerplay.next.com.au), with "NGN Poll" in the subject line. Results to be published in #49.

In #45 we asked: **"How interested are you in a persistent massively multiplayer strategy game?"**

While a few respondents expressed unbridled enthusiasm for the concept, most were more cautious in their embrace. It's clear to most people that there are plenty of tricky gameplay issues inherent in this type of persistent game, just waiting for some brave developer to attempt to resolve them. We'll wait and see how the likes of Verant (with Sovereign), Segasoft (with ioSix) and Microsoft (with Allegiance), amongst others, go about the task.

## A crucial step

I'd say looking into the development and evolution of MUDs would be a crucial step in the design of a large scale, persistent, strategy game. Such games are only as good as their administration.  
Lee Skidmore

## Backstabbing

The replay value of a game like this would be endless, as has been seen in such online games such as Ultima Online and EverQuest. I think the more gameplay options the better, as there would be more than enough ways to destroy your opponent rather than just brute

force. You could ally with a local territory and get some information on their trade routes.

You could then inform their enemy of these routes and watch your ally's economy hit rock bottom. Backstabbing would be just one dirty tactic in the gamer's arsenal. I eagerly await such a game, and can't wait for a developer to take the challenge of producing the best online experience yet, and I'll be the first to buy such a game.

Andrew Gardiner

## A big Y-E-S!

In response to the question, I would have to say a big Y-E-S! Admittedly I don't play a huge amount of online games, but a game such as this may really get me into online gaming. I enjoy RTS already and, judging by the previews of Sovereign, it just goes to show what potential there is for the genre. I am wholeheartedly looking forward to the coming games and urge all of you out there not to dismiss them without at least giving them a try.

Chris Grady

## Work quite well

At first I thought the idea of a massively multiplayer strategy game would be boring, and probably not work well enough to



Sovereign

pay a monthly fee on or buy in the first place. But then I read the preview of Majesty: Sovereign of Arдания and decided a MMSG that ran like this, without giving you direct control over your troops, would probably work quite well and be worth a look at.  
Wojit

## TEAMPLAY TACTICS

Given the success of Unreal Tournament's Assault and Domination modes and the flood of teamplay-based titles on the horizon, it's obvious that gamers enjoy cooperating with their friends as much as shooting them. So, this month we ask: **"Which team-based action game are you most looking forward to - Team Fortress 2, Halo or Tribes 2? And why?"**



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# Computer Games in Australia Today

THE OFLC TABLES ITS MOST COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

From 1995 through to 1999, Australia's Office of Film and Literature Classification (OFLC) conducted a study into the nature of electronic gaming and the way in which electronic games are perceived and utilised by Australians. Conclusions were reached through the exhaustive examination of existing literature, and through interpretation of data compiled during a comprehensive nationwide investigation that was conducted throughout the duration of the project. In late 1999 the findings of that study were made available to the general public in the form of a 180-page report entitled 'Computer Games and Australians Today'.

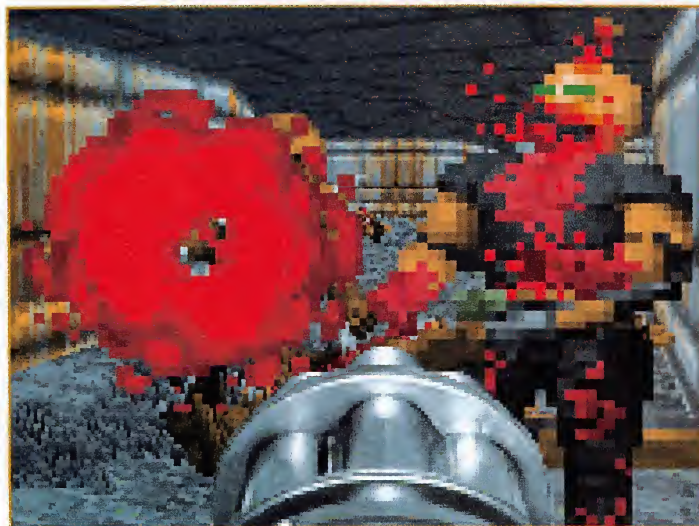
## Mistaken Assumptions

The report serves to dispel many of the widely held myths surrounding electronic games and gaming in general. In particular, it debunks theories associated with perceived negative implications of engagement in electronic game play. Much of the perception that violent games cause violent behaviour in players stems from the mistaken assumption that, due to the interactive nature of electronic games, some players are unable to distinguish between fantasy and reality, and thus

emulate scenes and behaviour within games. This theory became especially popular in the weeks and months preceding the Columbine High School massacre, and is now the basis for a class action suit against industry giants like id Software, among others. In response to this, the report states that "younger children indicated that they could distinguish between fantasy and reality, while older surveyed research participants expressed concern about the younger children's ability to do so." Encouraging in some respects, but disturbing in that many of the surveyed adults seem to grossly underestimate the intelligence of minors.

The report also states that "there is no evidence to support fears that electronic game play contributes substantially to aggression in the community... Electronic games do not have more profound effects on behaviour and attitudes than any other medium. This conclusion is based on existing literature, and is consistent with community perceptions." Further, "there is no evidence that members of Australian society perceive electronic games as a major social problem, and none of the independent research published to date has demonstrated serious effects of aggressive game play among young people's behaviour."

Computer Games and Australians Today acknowledges the fact that some reports based on research conducted into potential correlations between violence in electronic games and aberrant and antisocial behaviour on the part of those that play them, have been biased and misleading. It also draws attention to the fact that media coverage of electronic games is inherently negative, something that heightens community concern about game violence, and perpetuates misconceptions among those susceptible to sensationalist rantings. The report concludes: "To some extent, community concern about electronic games may be fuelled and exaggerated by misleading media coverage of the topic."



If games such as Doom warranted an MA rating five years ago...

## Classification Parity

The report also lays to rest the distressingly common belief amongst politicians and legislators, as well as much of the wider community, that electronic gaming is an entertainment pursuit enjoyed solely by young children, and goes on to discuss one of the greatest shortcomings of Australia's classification system.

"Adults are now regular users of electronic games. There is no known psychological peculiarity of the computer game experience which indicates that a differential classification system should be applied to this medium. In an environment of rapid changes in media, parity among classification systems for different cultural products is desirable in the interests of consumers and the industry."

According to the report, when devising the original game classification system in 1994, "The Ministers [with Censorship responsibilities] directed the Classification Board at the OFLC to apply more strictly the electronic games guidelines than those for the classification of film and videotape. The more stringent approach to this medium was premised on concerns that the interactive nature of electronic games might mean that they have the potential for greater impact, and hence greater harm, on the child consumer."

In addition, the following

further highlights the outdated nature of the current classification legislation, in that it perceives electronic gaming to be a pastime enjoyed only by young children: "Under the current regime, there is no provision for games which exceed an MA15+ classification. Games that contain themes or content which may warrant restriction to adults only are not currently permitted, even though comparable content in other media is permitted. It appears anomalous and without scientific basis, to treat one medium as different from others in this respect."

## Restricted Category

These realisations on the part of the OFLC may hold some very positive implications for the gaming industry and the general public alike. Adoption and implementation of a new system of classification, incorporating a new Restricted (R) category of games available only to persons over the age of 18, would be ideal. But whether or not those findings will be acted upon is questionable. The current political climate of ultra-conservatism may see the existing system retained under the erroneous assertion that it is more than adequate. Continuing negative portrayal of electronic games and of the gaming community itself by ignorant and less-than-reputable current affairs programs, and opposition from vote-hungry

## ADDITIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

■ **94%** of 12-17 year olds and **53%** of adults surveyed have played an electronic game within the last year.

■ Electronic gaming ranked as a popular form of entertainment in **71%** of surveyed adults under 35 years of age, and **41%** of those over 35 years of age.

■ **63%** of surveyed adults felt no more concerned about the violence in electronic games than that shown in movies.

■ **71%** of 12-17 year olds and **38%** of adults surveyed were aware of the classification system for computer games.





...then maybe an R classification is needed for titles like *Soldier of Fortune*.

politicians may also stymie the classification reform process.

Furthermore, the report's findings may be further negated by the very nature of gaming technology. The legislative process is such that the legislation of cutting edge technologies is often rendered obsolete by the rapid supersession of those technologies. Much of the OFLC's research into the violent content of some electronic games was based upon games like *Doom* and *Duke Nukem 3D*: titles that are considered antiquated by today's graphics standards. Ingame graphics (particularly those portrayed in titles developed for high end PCs, next generation consoles and arcade machines) are exponentially increasing in quality and realism. It is utterly conceivable that they will approach photorealistic levels of detail within the next decade.

As a result of this phenomenon, an argument could be propounded to the effect that Australians were less concerned than initially anticipated about the portrayal of violence within games, due partially to the comparatively low realism levels resulting directly from their low visual quality. It is hoped that those devising future classification systems will bear in mind the aforementioned findings of the same research into electronic gaming, which confirm that there is no documented evidence of negative sociological

and psychological manifestations resulting from the play of electronic games. Steadfast refusal to be swayed by conjecture on the part of biased and extremist persons will be required, should Australians wish to become subject to an equitable game classification system.

Brett Robinson

### CONTACT DETAILS

PC PowerPlay readers wishing to obtain a copy of 'Computer Games and Australians Today' will find information on how to do so at the OFLC web site located at [www.oflc.gov.au](http://www.oflc.gov.au). OFLC staff can also be contacted directly on (02) 9289-7101. Those concerned about the current classification system, and who support proposed reforms to the relevant legislation, are encouraged to submit their opinions to the OFLC in writing at either of the following addresses:

Office of Film and Literature  
Classification  
Levels 5 and 6  
23-33 Mary Street  
Surry Hills NSW 2010

Or  
Office of Film and Literature  
Classification  
Locked Bag 3  
Haymarket NSW 2000

# CHARTS



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THIS MONTH	WEEKS IN	GAME/ PUBLISHER
1	4	<b>PLANESCAPE: TORMENT</b> INTERPLAY
2	13	<b>AGE OF EMPIRES 2</b> MICROSOFT
3	8	<b>HALF-LIFE: OPPOSING FORCE</b> SIERRA
4	9	<b>PHARAOH</b> SIERRA
5	7	<b>QUAKE 3: ARENA</b> ACTIVISION
6	8	<b>UNREAL TOURNAMENT</b> GT INTERACTIVE
7	4	<b>X: BEYOND THE FRONTIER</b> THQ
8	21	<b>HALF-LIFE</b> SIERRA
9	10	<b>DELTA FORCE 2</b> ELECTRONIC ARTS
10	10	<b>BALDUR'S GATE COLLECTION</b> INTERPLAY PRODUCTIONS
11	14	<b>ROGUE SPEAR</b> RED STORM
12	22	<b>C+C:TIBERIAN SUN</b> WESTWOOD STUDIOS
13	12	<b>ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON ADD-ON</b> MICROPROSE
14	16	<b>DRIVER</b> GT INTERACTIVE
15	2	<b>HALF-LIFE ADRENALINE PACK</b> SIERRA
16	8	<b>SWAT 3D</b> SIERRA
17	6	<b>DICK JOHNSONS V8 CHALLENGE</b> AUDIOGENIC
18	1	<b>CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 99/00</b> EIDOS
19	10	<b>THEME PARK WORLD</b> ELECTRONIC ARTS
20	13	<b>FLIGHT SIM 2000 PRO EDITION</b> MICROSOFT



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# GAME ~ of the ~ YEAR 1999



There can be no doubt that 1999 has been a great year for gaming. Intriguing and challenging, many of the titles released in the past year pushed the very limits what we believed could be brought to life on a computer. So many of the titles in 1999 moved away from the label of 'game', into the realm of 'experience' or 'addiction'. Titles like *Half-Life* and *Tribes* revolutionised the firstperson shooter genre, while *System Shock 2* and *Thief* had hardened gamers quaking in their chairs in fear. And speaking of Quaking, the much anticipated 'Quake 3 Arena vs Unreal Tournament' battle didn't fail to disappoint, with a wide line still between the two camps. The harsh beauty of Quake's design, or the inadequacy-inducing intelligence of Unreal's superior bots - you decide. *Rainbow Six* had

some people thinking with trigger fingers, while *Homeworld* gave others a new world of strategy to explore. Yes, it's been a damn good year. While the passage of time and our short attention spans are evident, it is interesting to note that our recent 'Top 50 Games of All Time' featured six of the titles honoured below. Well, they would have been honoured below, except that the readers of PCPP overwhelmingly chose to bestow their honours on only one exceptional game... Valve Studio's *Half-Life*.

## BEST INTRO *Half-Life*

From the opening scenes of *Half-Life*, the menace sets in. As your train slowly takes you through the Black Mesa Laboratories you observe unnerving events. A broken machine drips sparks onto the ground. A black-suited man



watches your train with disturbing interest. The all-too-calm voice of the announcer points out safety regulations that you'll soon be breaking with abandon. All this contrasts markedly to the action spectacular of mech-mania that is the runner-up, *MechWarrior 3*.

## BEST STORYLINE *Half-Life*

With so many top contenders, there are plenty of examples to put forward for inclusion into high school text lists this year. *Half-Life*'s



mix of suspense, shock and action certainly went down well, and was the hands down winner over the critically acclaimed *System Shock 2*.

## BEST MUSIC *Half-Life*

Frankly, we can't even remember the music in *Half-Life* and were mildly surprised to see it do so well. However, following on were the pumping hip-hop grooves of Cypress Hill in *Kingpin*, and the funky Mexican rhythms of *Grim Fandango*.





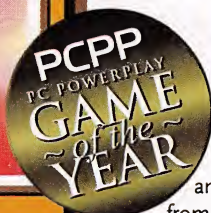
### BEST GRAPHICS Quake 3: Arena

■ Always a contentious category, and highly dictated by personal taste, **Q3A** obviously satisfied the most people. Its combination of smooth lines, brightly coloured powerups and fantastical arenas moved it into the realm of moving art. Others preferred the steroids-in-space look of **Unreal Tournament**, with the infinite beauty of **Homeworld** gliding smoothly into third place.



### MOST ORIGINAL Homeworld

■ Forging a new path for space strategy games, the epic nature of the gameplay in **Homeworld** got the nod for this hotly-contested prize. **Half-Life** was there as well, after breaking the mould for FPSs. But who the hell voted for **Silent Hunter II** (check out our preview) or **Mortal Kombat 4** (can you count?)



## BEST GAME OF 1999 Half-Life

A worthy winner, **Half-Life** became both the bane of, and the reason for, the existence of many early last year. Far from being pigeon-holed as 'just another firstperson shooter', gamers were in awe of the superior AI, devilish puzzles, intricate design and pounding action of this blockbuster. Gordon Freeman's quest - to escape the worst day at work ever - was taken up by thousands of ecstatic gamers, who successfully fought off the head-crabs, the marines, the helicopter and a multitude of deadly foes. The suspense and intensity of this game can not be underestimated - as many still bear the scars of night-long sessions at the Black Mesa research labs. Gaining a massive 42% of the total vote, this is just the first of many categories that **Half-Life** deservedly takes out in this year's awards.

The runner-up in this year's prize fight, with an admirable 10% of the vote, is the other-worldly **System Shock 2**. If making gamers paranoid, skittish and afraid was the aim of Looking Glass - then they succeeded beyond anyone's wildest dreams. This game is as close to a masterpiece as any RPG could get. Also polling highly were **Q3A** and **UT**, as well as the masterful **Age of Empires 2**.



## BEST SOUND FX Half-Life

■ Valve's magnum opus picks up another gong, for their amazing sound art. The atmosphere generated in **Half-Life** through the use of sounds is fantastic, but is nothing compared to the unbelievably realistic weapon and impact sounds. The all-pervasive suspense of **System Shock 2** creaked and squealed into second place, with **Alien vs Predator** (another game in the welcome trend of having listening as an important part of gameplay) screaming and blasting into 3rd place.

## MOST IMPRESSIVE AI Half-Life

■ With 52% of the vote, this was one of the most comprehensive victories in the poll. From the basic head-crabs to the marines (who would cover for each other, and flush you out with grenades - the bastards) **Half-Life** is an example of games being just as smart as you. The much-lauded bots of **UT** were runners-up, followed by the tangos of **Rogue Spear**.

## BEST INTERFACE Age of Empires 2

■ When it comes to interfaces, few are as important as those in strategy titles. And when it comes to building your Empire, **Age of Empires 2** does it best. The hackers obviously prefer **System Shock 2**, this category runner-up, with **Half-Life** in third.

## BEST ENEMY Half-Life

■ While there were many personal choices ("I can't sleep at nights - I still think Shodan's trying to kill me" - B. Daner, Canberra) the overwhelming numbers got behind **Half-Life's** wide variety of baddies. **System Shock 2** was in second place, followed by those classic bad-arses: the **Alien** and **Mr Predator**.

## BEST DRIVING/RACING Grand Theft Auto 2

■ Not your usual racer, and not your usual game. Addictive as hell  
**Runners-up:** Need For Speed: High Stakes, TOCA Touring Cars 2

## BEST FANTASY SIM MechWarrior 3

■ A very even result, with the pedigree of Mech3 holding on  
**Runners-up:** Heavy Gear 2, X-Wing Alliance

## BEST ACTION/ADVENTURE Resident Evil 2

■ Big titles (Tomb Raider, Shadowman, Phantom Menace) fell by the wayside, with the Capcom zombie-fest taking the bacon  
**Runners-up:** Abe's Exoddus, Heretic 2

## BEST STRATEGIC ACTION

**Thief: The Dark Project**  
■ Red Storm split their vote, and Thief stole the prize. Ironic, non?  
**Runners-up:** Rainbow Six, Rogue Spear

## BEST FIRSTPERSON SHOOTER (SINGLE PLAYER) Half-Life

■ With 82% of the vote, it always looked safe!  
**Runners-up:** (distant!) Alien vs. Predator, KingPin

## BEST FIRSTPERSON SHOOTER (MULTI-PLAYER) Quake 3: Arena

■ The another fight settled, with 34% preferring Q3A over UT's 29%. Take it to the carpark from now on.  
**Runners-up:** Unreal Tournament, Half-Life

## BEST FLIGHT SIM Falcon 4

■ Unbelievable good, this is combat flight at its best.  
**Runners-up:** European Air War, Flight Sim 2000

## BEST TURN-BASED STRATEGY Worms Armageddon

■ There's no magic, no kingdoms, no star-fleets. Just those pesky cellar-dwellers!  
**Runners-up:** Heroes of Might and Magic 3, Alpha Centuri.

## BEST MISSION PACK Starcraft: Brood Wars

■ More joyous brooding for Starcraft owners.  
**Runners-up:** Age of Empires: The Rise of Rome, Rainbow Six: Eagle Watch.

## BEST ONLINE ONLY Team Fortress

■ 56% of the vote. That screams popular to us. Just waiting for the sequel ...  
**Runners-up:** Starsiege: Tribes, Everquest



## BEST REAL TIME STRATEGY

■ Age of Empires 2  
One of the best games - of all time.  
**Runners-up:** Homeworld, Tiberian Sun

## BEST ROLEPLAYING System Shock 2

■ A huge winner (68% of those polled) just like its impact.  
**Runners-up:** Baldur's Gate, Fallout II.

## BEST SPORTS FIFA 99

■ Few do it better than FIFA.  
**Runners-up:** (tie) Cricket World Cup 99, NHL 99

## BEST ADVENTURE Grim Fandango

■ LucasArts show the others how it's done.  
**Runners-up:** Discworld Noir, Gabriel Knight 3.

## BEST PINBALL Big Race USA Pro Pinball

■ An office favourite, and worthy winner  
**Runners-up:** Microsoft Pinball Arcade, Judge Dredd Pinball.

## BEST ARCADE Mortal Kombat 4

■ "Hit me baby, one more time..."  
**Runners-up:** Asteroids, Get Medievil

## WINNER OF THE LOGITECH WINGMAN FORMULA:

Jono from Mosman, NSW





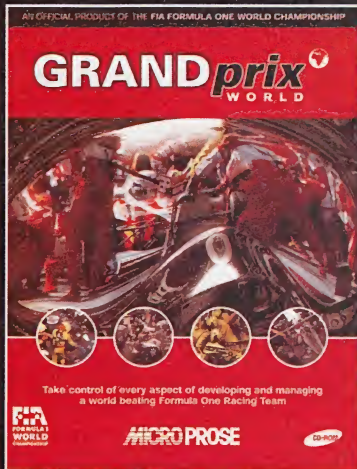
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PC CD-ROM



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# THIEF II: THE



## DETAILS

- Genre: Firstperson Sneaker
- Players: 1
- Developer: Looking Glass
- Publisher: Eidos
- Due: March

**\*** In the closing scene of 1998's most breathtakingly original game, *Thief: The Dark Project*, rogue anti-hero Garrett is cautioned by a member of the elusive Keepers: "Beware the dawn of the Metal Age." After foiling the Trickster's Dark Project, Garrett had rather optimistically thought he might have been free of the inter-factional warring that nearly tore apart the City. He was wrong, of course. Indeed, the Metal Age is now almost upon us, and the time is once again ripe for a little burglary...

## Immersive suspense

*Thief* was the world's first ever "firstperson sneaker". The design brief formulated by Looking Glass decreed that the game's action was to be delivered predominately through the avoidance of what had previously constituted action. Getting involved in fights, killing enemies, even being seen by the AI characters - these were all to be regarded as undesirable by such a subversive new gameplay direction. So why did it work so well?

Immersion - the sense that there is little mediating the experience of the game's character from the player's experience of the game - is perhaps the most important factor of any firstperson game. It's where *Thief*



# METAL AGE



THE ORIGINAL FIRSTPERSON SNEAKER IS BACK. WITH BLACKJACK AT THE READY AND MECHANICAL EYE IN PLACE, IT'S TIME TO RETURN TO THE SHADOWY DEPTHS OF THE CITY...



excelled so brilliantly, and why the game was such a mighty achievement. Thief was the most immersive game I've ever had the pleasure of playing; whilst doing so, I felt like the inhabitant of a virtual world. One of the reasons for this, I believe, is that Garrett is a mere mortal and as such his life is placed in constant peril by the assortment of enemies he

encounters. Hence, it takes no great leap of imagination to relate to his situation. According to Producer Steve Pearsall, it's a goal that Looking Glass strives toward with its every release.

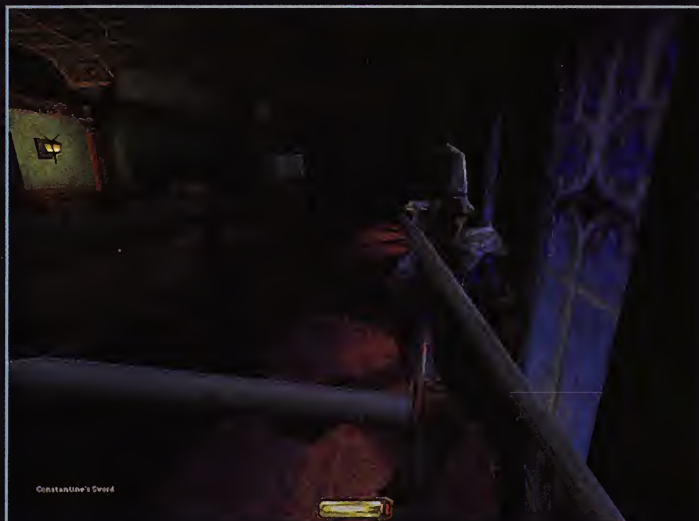
"Creating an immersive experience plays a central role in our design for every game we do," he outlines. "We spend a lot of resources creating a believable

world for Garrett to inhabit. We spend a lot of CPU cycles running a simulation of that world so that it runs whether the player is present or not. We want to avoid a world that seems totally centred around the player, as that doesn't work to create a world that immerses the player in their role as Garrett. As you say, the fact that Garrett reacts to attacks like a

real human instead of a battle tank also helps to create the suspense and tension necessary to make the firstperson sneaker concept fun, enjoyable and immersive."

## Suspicious minds

As a firstperson sneaker, Thief was very much an experimental title. While it may have proved







## KEEP YOUR EARS OPEN

Audio is an oft-neglected feature in many games. Frequently it seems that sound is considered by developers as more of an afterthought than a critical factor. This is understandable when most gamers either ignore its crucial role or simply take it for granted. In the Thief series, however, the audio component is a vital cog in the gameplay machine, and of at least equal importance to the games' visual aspect. I spoke with Eric Brosius, the Lead Audio Designer on both Thief titles.

**PCPP:** How early in Thief's development was the importance of the role of sound realised?

**Eric:** The team knew right from the start that if stealth was to be the thing in Thief, then light and sound had to be considered in almost every aspect of the game. For example, the AI was written around receiving and responding to not only visual, but aural information in the world. Our main goal is to try to make the audio fit the game so closely that you couldn't imagine it otherwise. The audio must add to the immersion, help the world feel real and solid, and further the emotions conveyed in the story.

**PCPP:** What new technology had to be created to meet the needs of the game?

**Eric:** The most important new sound technologies involved the AIs having to be able to hear, which meant sound had to propagate through the 3D world correctly. Both of these were major

programming tasks. The Dark engine has a sound propagation system that lets sound travel in 3D: sound moves down hallways, around corners, and is blocked by closed doors.

**PCPP:** The spatial nature of the sound in the game is particularly impressive.

**Eric:** Well, in most games, sound radiates out in all directions without much regard to the 3D spaces in the world. In Thief, sound that you hear, and sound that the AIs hear, travels through the 3D space as it would in real life. Thief really could not be played without this system.

**PCPP:** Will sound always run secondary to graphics, in terms of development time spent and the appreciation of the end result?

**Eric:** Right now, visual splendour has more 'wow' power than audio does. It's probably because it's easier to quantify: is there coloured lighting? curved surfaces? reflective surfaces? how many polygons? I think that too many times graphics are judged solely on these terms, and I wish a little more attention was given to the bigger graphics picture. Our focus has always been on developing the engine's tools that designers eventually use, on more gameplay-type mechanisms. In Thief, there was a lot of focus on lighting, not for eye-candy's sake, but functional lighting that would mean something in the world and affect the gameplay. Again, this is what it comes back to: immersion is the thing.



The lighting doesn't just look good, it's vital to the gameplay. Shoot a water arrow at the fireplace to plunge this room into darkness.

astonishingly successful in so many ways, when you consider just how unique the game's core gameplay concepts were - and still remain - it's not surprising that mistakes were made. Looking Glass learned a great deal from Thief, making the development of The Metal Age a much smoother process.

"We tried to re-use the design ideas that worked and spent a fair amount of time thinking of better ways to design our stealth gameplay for Thief II, then prototyping, testing and revising those ideas," says Steve, illustrating the level of research that went into the sequel. "We also spent a lot of time analysing reviews, and reading end-user comments on newsgroups and websites about what people really liked the most and things that could be improved."

One element that caused consternation among even die-hard Thief fans was the use of monster enemies. Nearly half of Thief's fifteen missions (including those from the Gold edition) were populated by non-human creatures like zombies, skeleton guards, spiders, and other strange cat, crab and bug beasts. Their contribution to the atmosphere was immense - it was, after all, a game about the conflict between nature and technology,







Garrett's new mechanical eye allows him to scout ahead while remaining undetected. Looking Glass claims this will deepen the game's strategy.



**"...YOU MAY HAVE TO  
FRAME SOMEONE FOR A  
CRIME THEY DIDN'T  
COMMIT..."**

the organic and the inorganic - but they also left many players feeling confused.

"Most players didn't try to sneak by the monsters as we had intended, but instead felt they had to fight them," explains Steve. "Our analysis led us to believe that this was because we didn't get across the state of the monster AI as well as we were able to with the speaking human AI. When a guard hears something suspicious, he says so and the player has an opportunity to hide. We tried to record suspicious growls, angry growls, and calm growls or similar sounds for each monster. However, it just didn't work, and players couldn't tell whether a monster was alert to their presence, so they just ended up fighting them and didn't have as much fun as they did when sneaking by human AI characters."

Looking Glass has taken steps to address this issue by focussing more heavily on human opponents and human-populated areas. Gorman Truart, recently elected sheriff of the City, is Garrett's nemesis this time around. Corruption is rife and people are mysteriously disappearing under Truart's regime, but this would be okay if it weren't for the small fact that he also wants Garrett dead.

Amid the City's internal political struggles,

where Hammerites and the Pagans are now joined by technologically superior Mechanists, Garrett must reveal Truart's true intentions and, more importantly, simply survive.

### Speak up

Most of the missions now occur solely within the confines of the City, with objectives stretching across a remarkably broad range of activities. At some point you may have to frame someone for a crime they didn't commit or investigate a murder scene; at other times there might be a spot of kidnapping or even the chance to stow away undetected on a ship. The simple break-and-enter job is most definitely a thing of the past, with the player now having to "case the place" before attempting a break-in. One playable mission I've seen even had Garrett smuggling someone through a mansion, thus having to ensure that the way was clear not only for himself but his companion as well.

Veteran fans will be pleased to hear that the "bear pit" guards - the comedy duo from the first game who seemed in the employ of every guardhouse in the City - are set for an encore appearance in The Metal Age. In fact, Steve says Looking Glass' voice actors have recorded over 4,000 lines of speech for the AI

characters, which is a large increase on that heard in during The Dark Project.

Whether it's through the provision of much-needed audio cues or the collection of clues via eavesdropping on AI conversations, speech actually plays an enormous part in Thief. It succeeds in drawing you further into the virtual world, which is the key to creating an immersive gameplay experience.

The Thief games are part of a growing trend that is moving games away from linearity and heavy scripting and towards being "digital toy sets", to use the current in vogue term. In its most minimal sense, here the player is still given a single objective, but also the ability to achieve that goal in a number of different ways. Looking Glass is keen to extend this kind of player freedom with The Metal Age, as Steve admits: "Our design goal is to give the player a variety of tools they can use to overcome any puzzle or situation we present to them. We try to create ensure multiple ways for the player to get through every situation."

Like its predecessor, then, Thief II remains at heart an experimental title. We'll see what bold concoctions and new solutions we can discover when it's released next month.

David Wildgoose



**\*PREVIEWS**

# FORCE COMMANDER

AFTER A MAJOR REDESIGN, LUCASARTS' PROMISING  
3D REALTIME STRATEGY GAME IS NEARING COMPLETION.







The meandering Dewback is not to be scoffed at on the battlefield. These placid creatures are just waiting to drool all over you.

## DETAILS

- Genre: Real Time Strategy Action
- Players: 1-Multi
- Developer: LucasArts
- Publisher: LucasArts
- Due: 1st Quarter 2000

\*LucasArts is most certainly at a crossroads. While sales have skyrocketed with some of their recent titles (The Phantom Menace and Podracer, for example), all is not well. In the past, the company has found a balance between its graphic adventure titles (Grim Fandango) and its action titles (Jedi Knight), where the quality of each was superlative. However many gamers have some serious concerns regarding the quality of the new games emerging for LucasArts. For many it seems to be an alarming trend towards the generic title for mass consumption, rather than quality gaming. Add to this the news that some long-time, high profile employees have recently left LucasArts (see Spotlight p 11 for more details) and you can imagine the rumours surrounding this storm of intrigue that Force Commander continues its steady path to release.

The hangar bay is where you select your landing party. Notice the dull looking "Doctor Who" style landing craft. Not very Star Wars at all.



Force Commander is a brave step for LucasArts, since strategy games are not something they're particularly known for, although Star Wars: Rebellion - from a couple of years ago (PCPP #24, 88%) - proved a decent start.

Still, version 1.0 the Force Commander showed signs of being unnoticed in a sea of RTS games that surfaced at the time. For the first iteration of Force Commander (its announcement was accompanied with a swag of telling screenshots) appeared very much a straight Dune 2 RTS clone. Using an almost identical structure as used in Dune 2, Force Commander promised players the option of controlling both the Rebels and the Empire over a sprawl of missions set in the familiar Star Wars universe. Fun, but not exactly innovative. So LucasArts went back to the drawing boards and have returned with a new and improved Force Commander. One in full 3D, sans isometric fixed perspective, and quite light on resource gathering and management.

## Full forward firepower!

The main action of Force Commander takes place around the events in Episodes IV through VI

(that's the original Star Wars trilogy, if you're wondering), so you'll weave throughout the action from just before Star Wars: A New Hope, right up to the end of Return of the Jedi. Readers might be surprised that LucasArts first realtime strategy effort is based on the aging Star Wars chapters instead of the sleek and stylish wiles of The Phantom Menace. Tis an obvious choice: The Phantom Menace hardly features a huge array of ground based units (and implementing an interesting underwater battle would have just caused major headaches). Nothing beats the grittiness of the Star Wars universe post-Vader, nor the pure grandeur of a giant AT-AT patiently and rigidly stomping its way on a battlefield. And being able to recreate the infamous and legendary Battle of Hoth? Enough said, really.

## Dantoine... Dantoine

As an officer of the galactic empire, Force Commander gives you control of Empire forces in the heat of some of the greatest battles in Star Wars, including the attack of the Rebel base on Hoth (yes!). Some of the other locations that the game travels to are the hills of



(right) Here we have some mighty Stormtroopers braving a knot of poorly armed Ewoks. Guess who's going to win.



Yavin, the forested Endor and the desert planet of Tatooine (where you receive your early training). A host of other locations have been created exclusively for Force Commander, each adhering strictly to the order of fitting well within the overall feel of the Star Wars universe. Abridon in particular, with its huge grassy plains, seems to borrow some from the plains of Naboo - the location where the Trade Federation Army and the Gungans duked it out in the conclusion of *The Phantom Menace*.

The best of both worlds then? Perhaps, and you'd be rewarded for keeping an eye out of the odd *Phantom Menace* reference hidden in the game. Force Commander is, however, firmly

The camera function of the beta code we got our hands on was far from ideal. Slow and unresponsive, the camera controls clearly need some more finetuning.

planted within the classic trilogy timeframe and features some new fiction to boot. The introduction of two new characters in the Star Wars universe, Brenn and Dellis Tantor, lets you experience the chain of Imperial command first hand. As these two characters move through events, opportunities may arise for loyalties to change in the battle with the Rebellion. You will be able to direct Rebel troops as well as Stormtroopers.

One of the big selling points of Force Commander will be its 3D environments, something we've been seeing much of in many recent titles. This will offer complete freedom to alter your perspective over your troops and the action. You will be able to zoom in and out and pan around your men in the floating mode or attach the camera to a specific unit for a first hand view of the action. The units available to you are all the old favourites that you'd expect: from Stormtroopers to snowspeeders, AT-ATs, AT-STs and Banthas. There are forty in all, with a sizeable collection of never before seen units.

## Double your efforts!

Force Commander is a Realtime Strategy, but at the action end of the scale. There is very little resource management to speak of - think *Myth: The Fallen Lords* in a galaxy far, far away. You don't have to collect resources to support your troops or structures, so you only have to

worry about the combat! You begin each mission with a certain number of troops and that's it! It's up to your personal skill as a leader to ensure that the missions are a success and that your troops survive. However, not wanting to leave the game at that, a system of Command Points features in the game, which introduces a whole new strategy to the proceedings.

Command Points are the reward for a job well done. Over successive missions, if you kick some Rebel butt, you will be awarded with Command Points. These Points can be used in subsequent missions, to either reinforce your troops or to build structures in the game. You will be penalised for bad performance on the battlefield, which includes using your resources poorly - for example, not having enough units on the field (hah! and you thought that Darth was a forgiving bloke). But those extra units will surely make things a little easier in your battle for the galaxy!

## You may begin your landing

The multiplayer options will enable up to four opposing forces to battle it out, over the internet or LAN. All of the game maps are available for play as well as a selection of multiplayer maps. You can take control of Imperial and Rebel forces in any combination. If you don't have any human opponents to take on, there is a skirmish option where you can go up against up to three of the game's own AI enemies.

The pre-release version of Force Commander we received is still in a very rudimentary stage. It must be said that the code as it stands is certainly a little questionable. With the title reportedly shipping in the coming months, this looks to be a cause for concern. We can only hope that LucasArts are holding out on us, working out the kinks and that Force Commander will meet the high standards that are expected of this promising action title.

**John Dewhurst**







PRO-RIDE II. GOOD CLEAN FUN.

STAY



TRUE



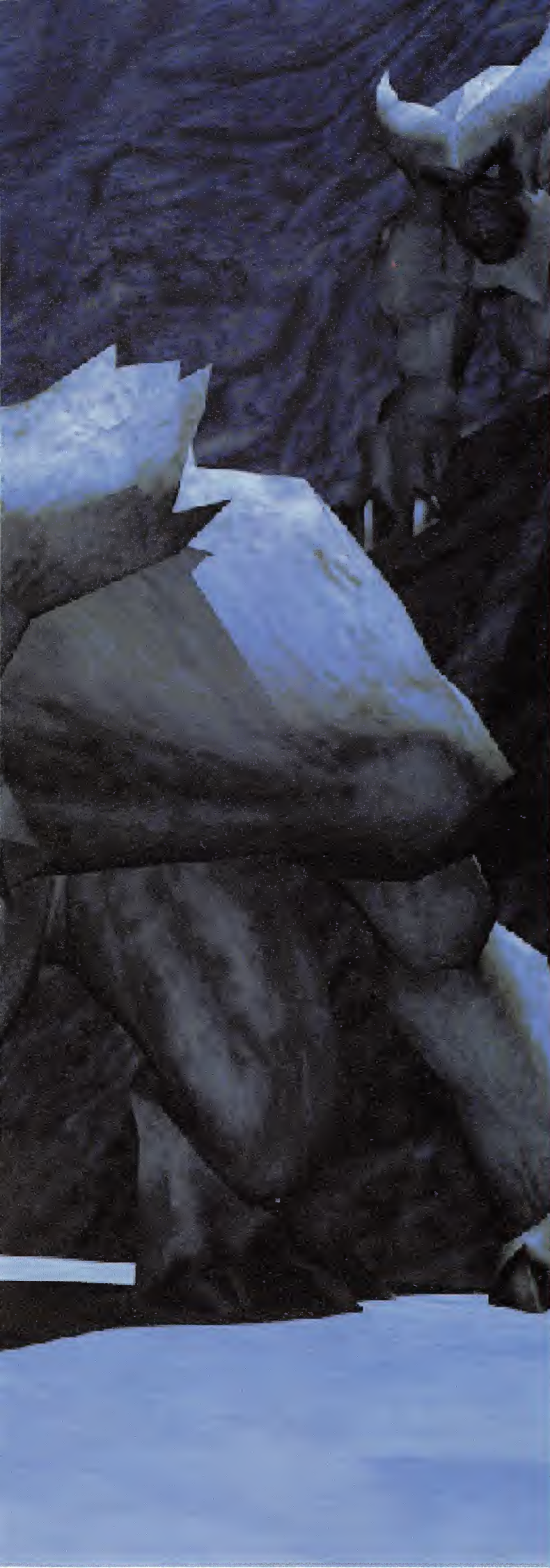
**\*PREVIEWS**

# RUNE

ARE A FEW FUNNY-LOOKING SQUIGGLES ENOUGH TO PREVENT THE APOCALYPSE? MAYBE ONE **BIG, BEEFY BLOKE WITH AN AXE** COULD TIP THE BALANCE IN RUNE'S FAVOUR.





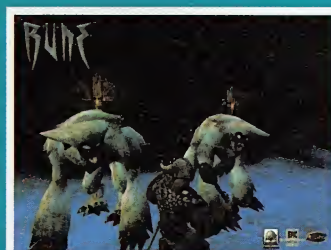


## DETAILS

- **Genre:** Axe-wielding Adventure
- **Players:** 1-Multi
- **Developer:** Human Head
- **Publisher:** Gathering of Developers
- **Due:** 3rd Qtr 2000

\* My old high school featured a Viking galleon emblazoned on the school crest. The sport houses were named after various Norse gods: Odin, Thor, Aegir and Freya (apologies to our Scandinavian readers for any spelling errors). According to far better genealogists than myself, the Wildgoose surname has been traced all the way back to Norway some five centuries ago. And, of course, there's my penchant for horned helmets, loincloths, buxom women called Helga and the odd (too infrequent now, much to my regret) excursion to pillage and plunder. All of which is to say that I feel a certain affinity with Ragnar, the hero of Human Head's forthcoming title. But there is another reason why I find myself enamoured with this distinctly Nordic-flavoured action/adventure, one that's possibly more important and slightly more relevant. And that is, Rune looks a pretty damn impressive game.

Significantly, to craft its diverse collection of underground, underwater, mountainous and heavily forested environments, developer Human Head has opted for Epic's Unreal engine. In fact, the relationship between the two companies is so good they're essentially co-developing the title. "Human Head Studios has been given unprecedented access to the



**From the top: Pillaging, plundering, and raping. All in a day's work.**

method. According to the game's lead animator, Jeff DeWitt, Rune's animation surpasses that of any title to date. Skeletal animation is not only far less memory intensive, but allows for an array of cool-looking effects.

A level-of-detail (LOD) system has also been introduced, while the AI has undergone prolonged rejigging (which probably isn't the technical term, but never mind) to account for the title's different gameplay needs. It must be said the result justifies the effort. Rune

## "ALL FINE IMPLEMENTS FOR A MERCILESS DECAPITATION..."

inner workings of Epic's current and future Unreal technology," reveals a very pleased Tim Gerritsen, Rune's Producer. "We've been working with the Unreal technology for months, and Rune's fantasy environments and real world physics will showcase the engine's amazing flexibility and power."

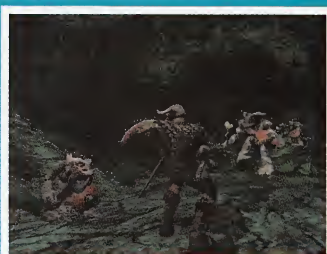
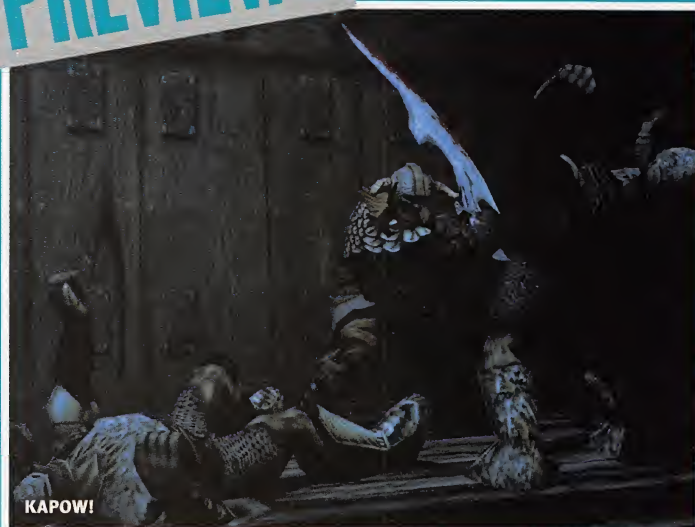
### Unreal myths

But the team's ambitions extend further than that. They've worked hard to create a whole raft of shrewd modifications and additions to the base Unreal code. Foremost is the much-vaunted skeletal animation system to replace Unreal's key frame

looks fantastic and exudes a pleasingly primal, wintry atmosphere.

Ragnarok, as any qualified historian will tell you, is the equivalent of the apocalypse in Norse mythology. Rune's eminently muscled hero, Ragnar, is striving to prevent such an event. In the game's opening cutscene, we witness an expedition Ragnar is undertaking to an unfriendly nearby village scuppered by a freak storm. When the game begins, we find him lost in an underground network of caves and deserted by his companions. From this starting point, the initial objective is to figure out where Ragnar is and





Skeletal animation allows for an amazingly diverse range of movements.

how he can return to his village, but there are naturally some wickedly unexpected plot twists just waiting up ahead.

So, Ragnar's a 10th century Viking trapped in a cave somewhere, presumably in Scandinavia, lost and all alone. But he's got an axe. A-ha! Rune is a bit of an action/adventure at heart. Despite its seemingly hidebound story and backdrop full of immense detail plundered from Norse mythology, there's plenty of flesh to get your blade stuck into. Melee combat is the game's *raison d'être*, which explains why Human Head chose to eschew a firstperson view in favour of a thirdperson, over-the-shoulder perspective. While the former is suited to ranged attacks, the latter excels when you engage an opponent in close proximity.

## Have at you!

Given several of the team's previous experience on the underrated *Heretic II*, it's clear they know how to nail down the most effective thirdperson camerawork and control method. Rune will, thankfully, feature the utterly essential mouselook interface. When in combat, attack moves are

accessed through a simple and rather intuitive process: left-click and hit a key to indicate a direction. To add depth, combos can also be performed, allowing Ragnar to string together a series of attacks. Further strategy is extracted by the presence of a shield in our tousle-haired protagonist's armoury. Considered positioning of the shield will prevent all but the most destructive blows from penetrating his defences. The axe (of the two-handed, battle and pole varieties) is his weapon of choice, but when necessary one suspects he'll settle for the club, flail, mace, or even a sword. All fine implements for a merciless decapitation, by my reckoning at least.

Some core game features remain up in the air, though, as Chris Rhinehart, who wears a Programmer cap on his Human Head, is keen to point out: "We are officially in pre-alpha crunch time, which I suppose is both a good thing and a bad thing. This part of the project is the most exciting because everything is really coming together as various elements are being refined and finalized during our push towards Alpha."

A touch of tactics is suggested

by the probable inventory restriction of just three weapons. With the various weapons each possessing differing characteristics (and of varying effectiveness against certain enemies), I can imagine some tough decisions as the game progresses. The developers are as yet undecided over whether crossbows and other missile weapons should make an appearance, fearing that they may unbalance the gameplay. Extremely limited ammunition is perhaps one solution. However, variety is sure to be provided by the promise of some magic elements, with Ragnar able to call upon the power of the gods when he finds certain extremely rare runic artifacts. Likewise the proposed potential for using most of the objects in the game as weapons (similar to Dreamcast fighting title *Power Stone*) is undoubtedly going to add a slice of unpredictability to proceedings. Lop off a troll's arm and beat him over the head with it? Sounds fun.

Rune, then. Dumb but lovable all the same. Maybe that's why I kinda like it.

David Wildgoose

## SNOW MONKEYS!

Even the most cursory glance at a bestiary such as this is enough to give credence to Human Head's claim that Rune will feature a unique range of enemies. They may claim to draw inspiration from Norse mythology, but the fact is they've also let their collective imagination run riot in designing this menagerie of opponents. To date

I've seen: dwarves riding frogs and various other mutant beasts, one of which seems to resemble a gecko crossed with a baby chicken; giant dragonflies piloted by orcs; an assortment of aquatic adversaries, including eels, dangle fish, and manta rays; grotesque flying beetles, giant worms and larvae - exoskeletons and invertebrates do appear to feature prominently; giant snow monkeys... Need I continue?





THE WAIT IS OVER.

Time to  
kick ass  
down under.

Are  
you  
with  
us?

ULTIMA ONLINE DISCOVERY EDITION  
COMING DECEMBER 1999

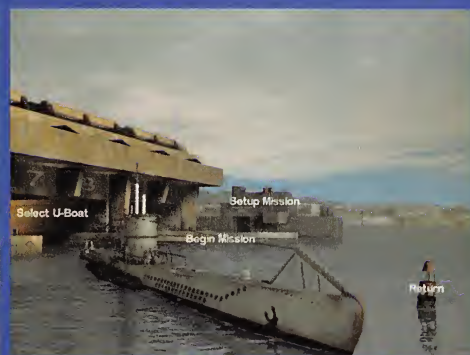






# SILENT HUNTER

SIT UNDERWATER FOR HOURS ON END IN THIS AUTHENTIC AND TENSION FILLED SIM.



## DETAILS

- **Genre:** Historical Sub Sim
- **Players:** At least one
- **Developer:** Aeon Electronic Entertainment
- **Publisher:** SSI
- **Due:** 3rd Qtr 2000

\* The most anticipated submarine simulation of the last two years may finally be getting ready to surface, although standing all hands to battle stations may still be a bit premature. According to SSI, the delay caused by assembling the right design team for Silent Hunter II will pay dividends in graphics quality and general gameplay, but only time will tell. Underwater enthusiasts have been

patient for quite a while, and this update may just give you the strength to hold out for a little bit longer. If it lives up to expectations, this game will be worth the wait.

Although it lacked the innovative feel of Silent Service II, and the truly immersive atmosphere of Aces of the Deep, the original Silent Hunter was a step forward in terms of graphics and technical detail. All stations were beautifully (if clinically) modelled, and the hardware of the time was pushed to the limit in simulating the complexities of undersea warfare. From what I've seen and heard so far, Silent Hunter II will seize the opportunities for improvement offered by the recent advances in

graphics and sound technology, and deliver a game that hits the mark in both the realism and atmosphere stakes.

## Don't U want me, baby

You're on the other team this time around, pitting various classes of German U-boats against Allied naval forces and merchant shipping. Whilst the German U-boat crews certainly enjoyed their famous 'happy times' early in the war, they probably faced a greater challenge than their Allied counterparts as the war progressed. The emphasis on historical accuracy that characterised Silent Hunter will again be evident, with technical advice provided by a genuine U-boat commander, and the use of

real-life engagements as the basis for many single mission scenarios.

A comprehensive scenario editor will support the campaigns and single missions, and the player will determine realism levels. At the higher settings, the chances of survival will be low, as players come to grips with the incredible odds that faced U-boat commanders in the later stages of the war at sea. New technologies will become available (to both sides!) as the war progresses, tactics will change, and historical aspects such as unreliable equipment and Allied access to code decrypts will have an impact on the result. Re-supply at sea will also feature, and concentration of forces for



Screens full of incomprehensible knobs, dials, meters and other twiddly things? Calling Major Des!



# TER II

"...OR LAY QUIETLY ON THE SURFACE AT NIGHT PRAYING THAT THE ESCORTS WILL MOVE AWAY."

'wolfpack' attacks will be possible.

## Depth Charge

Atmosphere is central to any game that involves hours of waiting punctuated by short bursts of frenetic activity. In a submarine simulation, you have to feel the stress as you sit under the water waiting for the depth charges, or lay quietly on the surface at night praying that the escorts will move away. When action does happen, it needs to be fast and furious - damage must be modelled realistically, reports from various stations need to be continuous, and players should feel the pressure as they grapple with the quick decisions that will either save or sink the boat. Silent

Hunter II will achieve this through a combination of high quality graphics in modelling equipment, objects and shipping, and the use of 3D audio for sonar and sound ranging.

On-board systems won't just look good - SSI has also gone to great lengths to ensure that their operation is faithfully reproduced. Wheels will turn, dials will spin, and buttons will be pressed. Whilst AI assisted modes will be available for target acquisition, gunnery, and torpedo firing solutions, those with a bent for hands-on work should find themselves in paradise. Even with the primitive computers of the day, engagements on a WWII submarine called for a combination of quick reactions,

quick maths and quick hands! As in real war, both then and since, success will depend in part upon the integration of all available systems - in this case sonar, radar when available, sound and visual observation.

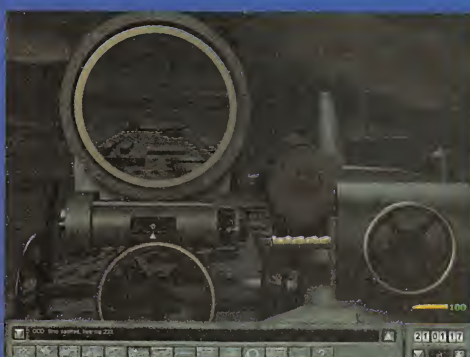
## Spice up your life

Estimating range is generally a hit-and-miss affair in naval sims, but improved graphics should enhance this aspect of Silent Hunter II in good weather conditions. Conversely, poor weather and reduced light will make the job that much tougher in some scenarios, leading to nasty, short notice surprises! Permissible view options can also be specified for each scenario - a feature that should satisfy the

purists who don't want to see anything that wasn't available to a real U-boat commander, as well as those who like to add a little spice to their life. In a departure from earlier WWII submarine simulations, underwater external views of your boat can also be selected.

With no obvious competition surfacing on the horizon, SSI has a chance to redefine the WWII submarine genre if they can get it right. Unfortunately, the much-vaunted inter-operability with Destroyer Command seems to have gone off the boil, and after a number of missed deadlines we'll believe the final release of Silent Hunter II when we see it - but we sure want to see it!

Major Des McNicholas



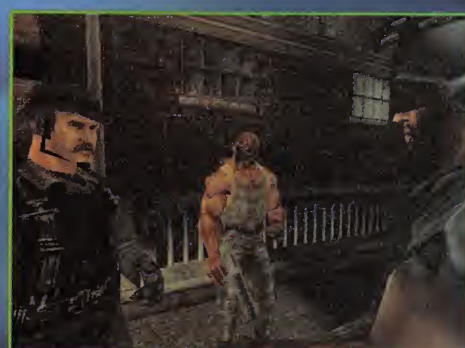
Sub Sims aren't exactly packed with action, but they can generate a frightening level of tension. No, really.



**\*PREVIEWS**

# SOLDIER O





# F FORTUNE

**WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN YOU TAKE ONE GUNG-HO, GUN-LOVING, ALL-AMERICAN MERCENARY AND STICK HIM INSIDE A HEAVILY-MODIFIED QUAKE 2 ENGINE? RAVEN'S LATEST FIRSTPERSON ACTION HERO.**

## DETAILS

- Genre: Military Shooter
- Players: 1-Multi
- Developer: Raven Software
- Publisher: Activision
- Due: March

**\*** When the latest playable code of Soldier of Fortune was smuggled into the PCPP office this month, I clamped my Bowie knife between my teeth, dispatched a 9mm round into the hapless courier, grabbed the CD and hurled down several flashbangs to cover my escape, vaulted the partition and scrambled across Malcolm's desk as both Dan and March fired blindly into the smoky haze and, after quickly setting up an unbreachable series of tripwire mines outside, bunkered down in the Next Gaming gamesroom. Whereupon I pulled up a comfortable wheely chair, placed the camouflaged CD into the disc drive and proceeded through the

handy step-by-step installation program.

## Bloody ankles

Chances are you know of Soldier of Fortune. Or, at least, you've heard of some of the controversy it's generated during its now lengthy development. The hype would have us all believe this is one of the most violent games ever created, surpassing even the bloodthirsty Kingpin for gibs per polygon. Judging from the levels I've seen, this bold claim could well hold more than a grain of truth. Limbs fly from your assailants' torsos with alarming frequency, while it's only a slight exaggeration to say that much of your time is spent wading ankle-deep through pools of blood. Though what really makes SoF stand out is not the sheer amount of gore, but rather the explicitness of the carnage. Realism is the key concept for developer Raven Software, following a credo that

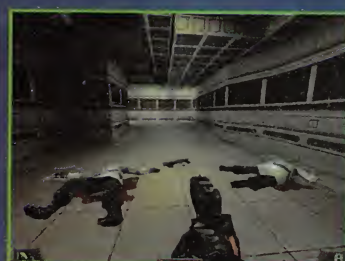
would seem to suggest the more graphic the violence, the more immersive the game.

Most famous for the Heretic and Hexen games, Raven actually have quite a long and diverse history. The primitive RPG Black Crypt was their first title, followed some years later by their initial venture into 3D with the action-oriented roleplayer Shadowcaster. After Heretic and Hexen confirmed their ability to craft highly playable firstperson 3D shooters with first the Doom and then the Quake engines, they

reverted with rather less success to a topdown perspective for the similarly fantasy themed Mageslayer. Beyond Soldier of Fortune, there's the Quake III engined Star Trek: Elite Forces on the horizon. With that sort of track record, anyone would think id Software is Raven's R&D department.

## Gore zones

That's not to say, though, that Raven aren't averse to tinkering creatively with Carmack's code. Achieving a high level of realism



It's not exactly "Happyland Lovefest 3D;".

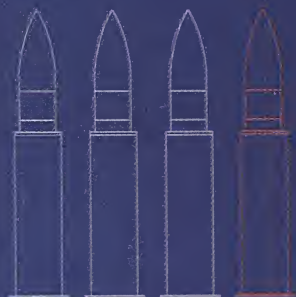




The 'negotiation and conciliatory behaviour' patch is on the drawcards.

has necessitated the introduction of a number of features atypical to the usual firstperson shooter. While several previous games have explored locational damage where shots to various areas of the body cause various effects, Raven has taken the process a step further. Each ingame character model is not only constructed out of oodles of polygons, but is divided into twenty-six so-called "gore zones", each demarcating lines of meaty perforation. As a result, shoot an enemy in the knee and he's likely to lose the entire lower half of his leg. In my experience it's decidedly easier to escape when your foe is forced to resort to hopping in pursuit. Better still, shoot him in the head so he can't even see where you've gone.

Which conveniently brings me to another crucial component of the game's endeavour towards greater realism. It's possible - in fact, it's preferable - to kill someone with a single bullet. Carefully aim at an enemy's head and he'll drop with just one shot. Of course, this one-shot-kill factor works in reverse - an accurate opponent can take you down with comparable ease. As a gameplay feature, too, it cuts both ways.



While it undoubtedly adds to the realism (not to mention being a brilliantly simple way to get the adrenalin rushing) and appropriately rewards the superior player, I can imagine its incredibly precise nature leading to much frustration. Instances where your newly mono-eared foe puts a slug through your stomach instead of slumping lifeless to the ground, for example. And before you ask, yes this did happen to me (several times), and no I wasn't being

the lack of saves, the limited health powerups, and the high potential for one-shot-kills present here all make for a very demanding challenge. Similarly realistic games such as Rogue Spear and SWAT 3 may scout much of the same territory, but their looser, more open-ended, and generally smaller level design creates a markedly different gameplay environment that alleviates somewhat the problems SoF now faces.

**"...TWENTY-SIX SO-CALLED 'GORE ZONES' EACH DEMARCATING LINES OF MEATY PERFORATION."**

careless. Just maybe shaking a little in fear for my life. Maybe. But don't tell anyone, okay?

### Extremely tough

At this late stage in development, it's clear that the main issue Raven needs to tidy up is the game balance. Right now, SoF is a fearsomely tough game, even on the medium difficulty setting. When a firstperson shooter promotes realism as its foremost design goal, there are certain issues that must be heavily considered. Realistic features like

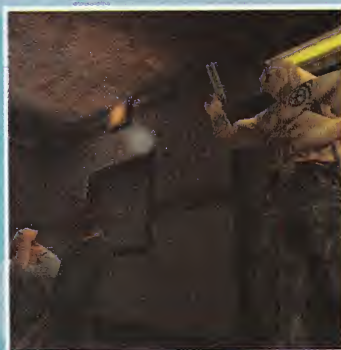
Thus, the issue is how do you design a "realistic" game that also adheres to the conventions of the "unrealistic" corridor-based firstperson shooter? How do you balance a game where just one bullet can kill, yet where just one man must tackle countless hordes of enemies? How Raven deals with its plentiful gestures toward realism, while at the same time trying to make a worthy contender for Half-Life's crown, will be crucial in assessing the game's overall success.

David Wildgoose

## MATURE AUDIENCES ONLY

One thing Raven has made abundantly clear throughout *Soldier of Fortune's* development is that it is most definitely an adult game. Drawing its license and inspiration from the extreme right-wing magazine of the same name, *Soldier of Fortune* is not a game for the fainthearted. In fact, it probably won't be just the usual suspects who find themselves offended. There's something of an unpleasant air of machismo that permeates through the game. It's not just the nature of the game's

license, nor merely the incredibly graphic violence that some will find objectionable. There's also a underlying sense of glorification that will disturb many, the uneasy feeling that you're meant to be not just enjoying but revelling in this bloodbath. Raven is walking a very fine line with *Soldier of Fortune*. It's this moral ambiguity that provides one of the most compelling cases yet for the OFLC to be granted the discretion to recommend an R classification for computer games.







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SPORT



# Quake 3 Arena

V







# S Unreal Tournament

We've packed away the magic eight balls, sent our Voodoo Mistress home for the month, and made sure that no sharp and pointy objects are within easy reaching distance. That's right, we're settling this contentious war of the FPS giants the old-fashioned way - the right way. Once and for all.

It's really quite simple - we've asked our learned colleagues here at Next Gaming (the home base for some of the most talented games journalists in the world) which of the two games they prefer, and why - Unreal Tournament or Quake 3 Arena.

There was only one condition: each and every one of them had to have had played both games, and in near inhumane quantities.

Come share in our combined wisdom, and let us lay this contentious argument to rest...



**David Wildgoose**  
News Editor, PC PowerPlay  
Nick: spaceboy

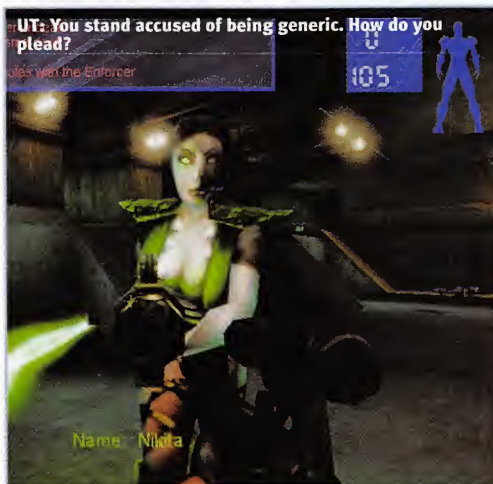
Why is Quake 3 better than Unreal Tournament?

Well, it's got some personality for a start. Give me Orbb, Anarki, Sorlag and Doom over the bland UT characters and their tedious, try-hard taunts any day. The charisma of Q3A extends to its weaponry as well, in which we find a beautiful, elegant simplicity. Whereas its rival's arsenal seems to adopt the misguided policy of quantity ahead of quality, the smaller number in Quake 3 means that each gun is utterly distinctive. Such differentiation also creates a far more interesting and balanced game, as each weapon is lethal given the right circumstances. Some would have us believe that the rocket is all there is to Quake. They are fools, so rail them at your leisure.

Throughout the trilogy, id has devised - and subsequently fine-tuned - a unique and instantly recognisable visual style. Take one look at the Arena of Death, for example, and you know you're playing Quake. In contrast, UT's seemingly random variety of locations actually counts against it; the end result is a skimming of the generic rather than anything truly memorable.

Beyond the aesthetics, Q3A also triumphs in its level design. Favouring a smaller, more compact layout, id's designers have perfected the deathmatch architecture at the third attempt. Is there anything more thrillingly intense than duelling a similarly experienced player around Vertical Vengeance? Or more graceful and precise than a balletic rail duel in The Longest Yard? On the whole, the arenas in UT feel too large, too aimless and sprawling. It's hardly surprising that UT is at its best when it apes the Q3A formula and ditches the pseudo real-world environments.

But hang on, what about the teamplay in UT, the Domination and Assault modes? Or so the argument goes. Well, to be honest, I could care less. Whether it's in the weapon balance, the level design or its sheer charisma, Quake III Arena's core gameplay holds so much more appeal that the initially more expansive options featured in Unreal Tournament are reduced to irrelevancy.



**Cam Shea**  
Deputy Editor, Hyper  
Nick: Parappa

God, thy name is id. All those with divine hardware should bask in your gibby glow. Although UT has a number of things going for it - fantastic AI, good play variety, and the fact that it's a hell of a lot of fun before you play Q3Arena - id Software are the masters of deathmatch, and some punk newbie isn't about to knock them from that position. Here's why:

In all areas of design, Quake 3 is more mature and sophisticated. Q3Arena features the best deathmatch level designs ever, with an elegance and holistic nature that UT's messy and often amateurish maps can't touch. All praise to "The Longest Yard" - my favourite map of all time. The engine is a glory to behold - speed and intense geometry in equal measure. Complementing the strengths of the engine are the incredibly detailed and varied textures (in a Quake game no less!), and masterful character design and animation. This is the prettiest game on the market right now, no question. The physics in Q3Arena are the best ever in a FPS, and the more you play, the more tricks and tactics are revealed. There's no doubt you'll be happy regardless of which game you buy, but for my money Q3Arena is more fun to play. And that's what counts right?

**Brett Robinson**  
Writer, PC PowerPlay  
Nick: Omega

Quake 3's visual splendour surpasses that of Unreal Tournament, but not by as large a margin as one might imagine. Of the two titles, UT clearly comes out on top in the innovation and variety stakes. Some very cool new weapons and play modes certainly make UT's act a hard one to follow. Conversely, id don't win any points in either area, but it's Quake 3's fluidity and the fact that it just "feels right" that ultimately gives it a slight edge over Unreal Tournament.



Q3A: Deathmatch master or blowing bubbles in the air?



**Q3A:** Are Quake's weapons the perfect arsenal or just more of the same?

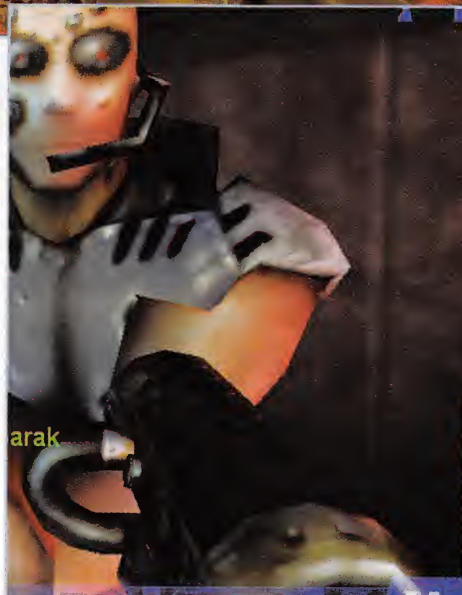


**Dan Ziffer**  
Editor, PC PowerPlay  
Nick: DanMan

I'd spent the months of November and December 1999 far away from any computer (yes, I don't know how I did it either) and so I couldn't wait to get into the Q3A vs UT battle.

UT initially offered up some fantastic game options, and a host of innovative weapons. Having an alternative fire mode for almost every weapon added to the feeling of freshness, and it seemed to have more variety than Q3A. But the lack of exciting player models was annoying, and the level design and décor was uninspiring. Over time, it became clear that the large array of weapons had similar attributes, with firing rates and damage comparable between many. It just didn't have the (bad pun) 'epic' feel I expected and wanted.

Q3A, however, felt good all over. The beautiful architecture of the levels, the character filled skins, the simple but effective menus. It really is all the little things that make up this phenomenal package. Gamers will find that its bots aren't up to the standard of UT's, but if you play on-line, you won't be worried. And even if you are looking for a single-player experience, Q3A won't just satisfy you, it will impress you.



**Eliot Fish**  
Editor, Hyper  
Nick: LordSeafood

Quake 3 Arena is SOLID.

When playing Quake 3 and Unreal Tournament back to back - which I have done - it feels so much more satisfying to leap around the architecture in Quake 3 than it does to slide around the drab textures of Unreal Tournament. Player models have more colour, life and chunky realism. Well, okay, they're both big cartoons really, but Quake 3 has more "pow" and "boom" to it. I will admit that Unreal Tournament has more to offer to gamers looking for teamplay rather than deathmatch, but that will probably soon change anyway with the release of Rocket Arena 3, Clan Arena and other new Quake 3 mods. The simplicity of the weapons in Quake 3 is also, personally, more satisfying when you wrangle a kill out of your last shotgun pellet - as opposed to spamming in secondary firing mode with six rockets in Unreal Tournament. After finishing Quake 3 Arena, I've played it through on my own another three times. I can't say the same for UT.

**March Stepnik**  
Deputy Editor, PC PowerPlay  
Nick: Polvo

I started first with Unreal Tournament. And what a fine deathmatch firstperson shooter it turned out to be. However, I found myself running out of steam (and patience) fairly quickly. As great an FPS Unreal Tournament is, there was something missing, something intangible that I couldn't quite put my finger on.

After picking up Q3A, it was made plain and clear what had caused part of my disinterest with UT and my absolute addiction to Q3A: the character. Id software painstakingly lavished an exquisite deathmatch engine with plenty of polish and shine. The character models, their animations, their taunts (I simply can't stomach UT's whining voice taunts), the level design, the textures, the weapons; when combined, these elements gel into a most impressive and slick whole. And it simply rocks my world.

Having now played through Quake 3 Arena on Hardcore (I'm still getting thrashed on Nightmare), another aspect of its genius has made itself known: the gameplay. Balanced within an inch of perfection, I get so much more satisfaction from finishing a Q3A level than I do a UT one. The speed, the weapons, the level design, the physics of Q3A - utter brilliance. When I play Q3A, I break into a sweat.

Sure, Unreal Tournament's got the quantity. But for me, Quake 3 Arena has the quality. For that reason alone I'm sticking with Quake.



**Q3A:** Hello, Orbb. Did you know there are people you think you're pretty stupid?

**John Dewhurst**  
Writer - PC PowerPlay  
Nick: Iannis

FPS titles generally aren't my thing. Which means that I approached Quake 3 Arena and Unreal Tournament completely unbiased.

Easy. Quake 3 rules! It's fast, easy-to-use, the weapons are well-balanced, the maps are fantastic. The same cannot be said for UT. It plays sluggishly, the physics are not as free, it's just plain awkward. I couldn't play it for more than an hour and won't go back to it either! The customising features are a nice idea but if the game sucks, then that's all a bit of a waste of time now, isn't it?



**Kevin Cheung**  
**Editor, Australian Station**  
**Nick: Daisaku**

I initially enjoyed Unreal Tournament more than Quake 3 for the simple reason that the new modes offered a more interesting time. However, once UT is completely finished, it doesn't offer anywhere near the replay value of Q3A - which is now, in hindsight, my favourite. There are a couple of reasons.

Firstly, Q3A has better maps and better physics. Sure, the bots aren't quite as smart as in UT, but I spend more time playing against people, who obviously provide a completely different challenge to the CPU. By comparison, UT's maps are unfortunately too linear, shallow, and unbalanced for proper multiplayer action.

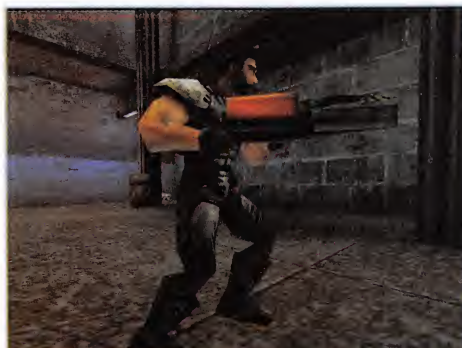
The other main reason is that Q3A seems to have more character and atmosphere than UT. It's especially noticeable when you're running a high-end PC that allows you to see the incredibly detailed environmental surfaces and character textures, and it's especially delightful when you can hear Phobos' own personalised "Graaargh!" or one of those fat chicks stomping around. UT, again by comparison, eventually looks stale with its persistent shades of grey. Even the constant intercom chatter becomes stale - "I sure nailed that guy" does become a bit boring after the 57th time you hear it.



**Harry Maragos**  
**CD Editor, PC PowerPlay**  
**Nick: Wolfman**

UT has got to be the best game I've played in 1999. I haven't enjoyed a FPS this much, since being knee-deep in action with Doom 2. So why's it so much better than Quake 3? Wow, where does one start... Ok, how 'bout the weapons. From firing twin automag pistols Johnny Woo style to slicing up your opponents, to even guiding nuke warheads through long twisted tunnels, UT comes fully loaded with serious firepower. Oh yeah, don't forget the twin firing modes which lets you zoom in on targets, build up your ammo, or combine your shots for maximum damage. The weapons in Q3 just don't cut it when compared to UT. Ever tried to gun someone down with the machine gun in Q3 - it's like you're firing rubber bullets.

There's plenty more reasons I love UT, the stunning graphics, jaw-dropping maps (more than Q3), different modes of play (DM, Assault, CTF, LMS etc.) smarter bots, devious traps, superior multiplayer and solo play, the non stop, hardcore addictive action, the list just goes on and on. But hey I'm not bagging Q3. I've invested some serious time in both and they're two of the greatest games that gaming gods have given us. Just that I like my action thick and fast, and should you decide to blink - bang - headshot.



**Malcolm Campbell**  
**Art Director, PC PowerPlay**  
**Nick: malkman**

I'll freely admit to being biased toward Quake 3 in this argument. The fact that it is simply a more polished version of Quake 1 is good enough for me. I don't want to re-learn the intricacies of the physics engine, or what the different ammo looks like, or new HUDs, armour and health. Quake 3 keeps it simple and fun, which is what deathmatch is all about. It's pure quality too - the maps and huge array of models look like they've been laboured over for months, evident by the amount of grey hair Paul Steed has gained since he was here last.

Unreal Tournament isn't technically a bad game. It just seems to have been developed with the sole intent of being a direct competitor for Quake 3, the product of savvy game marketers rather than the product of creative programmers. Instead of anything radically new, there just seems to be more of everything. More maps, more weapons, more modes of play, more options. UT has a serious case of trying to outdo Quake at every turn, and ends up trying too hard.

So in the ultimate deathmatch showdown, Quake is still the original and the best. Beware of imitations.

**UT: Are the bots geniuses or simply really annoying?**



**Major Des McNicholas**  
**Writer, PC PowerPlay**  
**Nick: TheMajor**

Quake III: Arena Vs Unreal Tournament? No question! - UT wins the day hands down. Even the demo provided some of the fastest action I'd ever experienced in an FPS, and I was hooked as soon as I jumped on line. The interface is simple, the level design immaculate and the variety (and effect!) of available weapons puts Quake to shame. When you couple all that with some pretty smart bots, fantastic graphics, settings that drip with atmosphere, and an unbelievable pace - Quake just isn't even in the running. I'll grant Quake better single play, but fast and furious online action is what these games are supposed to be all about. Avoid Quake Fatigue and go for the real thing!



**Final score: Q3A wins by 9 frags to 2. Excellent!**





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# REVIEW CONTENTS

ANOTHER MONTH OF GAMING GOODNESS

## SIM GAMES JOURNALIST

In the lead up to the review of *The Sims*, I'd wake up at 5am every morning to squeeze a good 2 hours of play before I'd use the facilities, have a wash, get dressed and leave for work. Of course, upon returning to my humble abode, I'd instantly fire up the game and sit at it for hours on end, in a sublimely oblivious state. Oh what a fantastic game!

So it wasn't surprising that I had a striking revelation whilst playing *The Sims*. Oddly enough, it occurred just as my character had sat down at his computer desk for a bit of gaming session. As William's fun meter started filling up, I began to wonder if anyone was watching me watch William, and whether or

not my happiness meter was working itself on the up. I also began to wonder if William, unbeknownst to me, was also enjoying *The Sims* on his little virtual PC. And then if so, what was Will's character up to? Playing *The Sims* too?

The next day, I sat down to write the review. Before I knew it, I had belted out a 60,000 word thesis on "Maxis, *The Sims*, *The Universe* and *Everything*" (*For ease of digestion we've cut this down to a mere six page review, which begins when you turn the page - Ed*).

Whoa! Since when did games induce that kind of deep thought? Usually, it's a mere synaptic glance as to whether one choose the

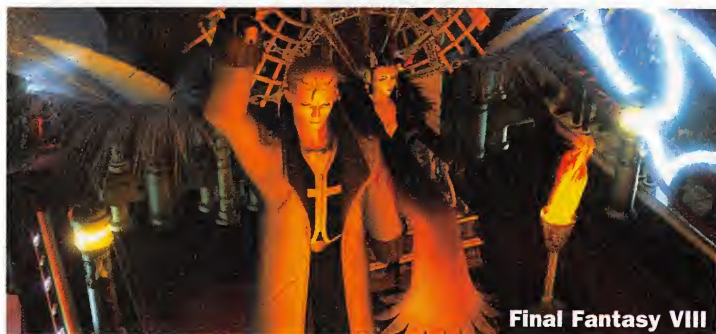
railgun or the rocket launcher. Or should one build infantry units or the big guns first? Will that big purple squishy thing work with the yellow polka-dotted ear cleaner? You can't help but start wondering if this trend towards "games as fables" is a welcome one. After all, games are supposed to be fun - and how can philosophy be fun? Well, *The Sims* is a challenging, thought-provoking, and damn *fun* piece of computer gaming. It's also mischievously irresistible.

Welcome to your new virtual home. And please, remember to flush.

**March Stepnik**  
Deputy Editor







Final Fantasy VIII

## ISSUE 47 REVIEWS

- 58 The Sims**  
Meet your new neighbours.
- 64 Final Fantasy VIII**  
Can we say 'epic' one more time?
- 68 Slave Zero**  
Big robots. BIG robots.
- 70 Septerra Core**  
Very stylish, anime roleplaying.
- 72 Speed Demons**  
Satan's racing game of choice.
- 74 Interstate '82**  
Weren't the Eighties better than this?
- 76 F/A 18 Hornet**  
Me so horny.
- 78 Pro Pinball: Fantastic Journey**  
But you can't tilt your PC.
- 80 Descent 3: Mercenaries**  
More tunnels.
- 81 Dracula**  
He's come to suck your... No, he just sucks.
- 82 South Park Rally**  
Ohmigod, they've killed the gameplay.
- 84 Pandora's Box**  
By the creator of Tetris.
- 85 Akuma: Demons spawn**  
Another anime RPG. But not so stylish.
- 86 Gorky 17**  
Don't forget to bring some vodka.

### THE PCPP REVIEW SYSTEM

**NEED:** The bare minimum system requirements to get the game up and running at a playable speed. Don't even think about the game unless you have this system.

**WANT:** The ideal system requirements for the game. You can still play it well without this setup, but this will allow you to see the game as it was meant to be.

**FOR:** The major reasons why you'll like the reviewed game.

**AGAINST:** The major reasons why you won't. Read both and decide which seems the most appropriate and important to you.

**95+ PLATINUM AWARD**  
A virtually flawless title, one that expands our gaming horizons while providing a supremely playable experience. The absolute best there is. Everyone will love this game.



**94-90 GOLD AWARD**  
A classic. Either an unquestionable example of superiority within its genre or a groundbreaking title that will soon be setting trends.



**89-80** A strong title that's hard to fault. Eminently playable and likely to remain on the hard drive for some time. But perhaps not the best in its field.

**79-60** Competent and playable. A few gameplay flaws or unoriginality hold this game back from a higher rating. For fans of the genre.

**59-40** Decidedly average. Probably either full of bugs or lacking some crucial features. But, most of all, probably boring.

**39-0** A dog. Bad, shamelessly unoriginal, cheap and horrible. Avoid.

# PC PowerPlay

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# The Sims

●Genre: People Simulator ●Players: 1 ●Developer: Maxis ●Publisher: Electronic Arts ●Distributor: Electronic Arts ●Price: \$79.95 ●Rating: G8+ ●Available: Now  
 ●Need: P233, 32MB RAM, 300MB HDD ●Want: P11, 128MB RAM, 500MB HDD ●URL: www.thesims.com

Welcome to your new virtual life...



It's not like they could have popped out to the chemist for a couple o' prophylactics.



So after getting down and dirty with the toilet bowl using my trusty plunger (the unit was quite unacceptably clogged up), I spent the next half hour dutifully mopping up the ensuing mess all over the bathroom floor. More than anything, I pondered the effectiveness of regular flushing as I sat there on my mighty throne, engaging in the unspeakable. After a gracious half an hour of "recycling the good old-fashioned way", I made my way to the bookcase and removed a tome titled *Toilet Mechanic - A Modern Guide To The Mini-Aqueduct*. After a few hours of dedicated study, the Big White Phone was no longer a source of great intimidation, and I felt at peace with the knowledge that I could now handle any challenge it could possibly throw my way. There was no doubt I was a better man for the experience.

With a great sense of contentment - even happiness - I went about my other chores. So I picked up my mould-ridden plates and dumped them in the dishwasher, took out

the trash, watered the plants, fed the goldfish, prepared dinner (and ate it), washed behind my ears and played a bit of chess against myself.

By the time I had completed all the above, it was well past my bedtime (not adhering to this crucial juncture perhaps my only failing), so I made the quick switch to my jammy-jams and tucked myself into bed for a night of pleasant dreams - not forgetting some much needed rest so that I could do the same thing all over again tomorrow.

Gee... life is swell.

## The People Simulator

Welcome to The Sims. If you've not yet heard of the latest Sim-ulation from Maxis - the same people who created the genre with the much-celebrated Sim City - then where have you been for the last twelve months? The amount of publicity The Sims has generated all around the world is simply astounding - those dancin', jivin' and fun-lovin' character models known simply as "The Sims" have been splashed about the TV, print and online mediums quite liberally,





William T. Ford has trouble stomaching Mr Daddy's cooking. Time to hit the cook books.

piquing a huge amount of interest. Everyone's talking about The Sims and it's not surprising why.

This quirky sim is one of the most ambitious and original PC games to surface in years, and it's also one of the most intriguing. For it combines Maxis' trademark "open-ended toy box" design philosophy with an incredibly open-ended subject matter: life. And who can't relate to that? No one (at least in a western, capitalist society) is excluded from The Sims' far-reaching appeal, for everyone can take one look at a Sims screenshot and immediately have some sort of affinity or understanding of the scene portrayed.

But the allure of the game goes much deeper than merely being able to identify with the subject matter. Maxis have promised a game where you can create and manipulate the life of a virtual soul - complete with tailored personality traits and appearances - in any which way you please. Players can express their dutiful sides and see that their Sims gets the best in care and attention, or players can explore their darker sides, and guide their creations through a living hell. More

significantly - there's no right or wrong way to play the game. Without a doubt, it is this aspect of the game which has generated the most interest - after all, we're all rabid voyeurs deep down inside. It is the ability to play god with real (simulated) human beings - complete with moods and feelings - instead of buildings or weapons of mass destruction. In a gaming context, which of the following two would appeal most to the maniacal aspects of our souls: a city hall crushed by the wrath of natural disaster or a human soul being destroyed by their provider? At least, the latter seems to be the most interesting to sit through.

### It's a strategy game

Yes, Maxis promised, and inadvertently set some might high expectations. And Maxis have delivered with The Sims. They simply call the game a people simulator, but really, that's about as useful a description as calling life a Great Big Game. For the sake of comparison, The Sims is an interesting concoction made up of strategy and role-playing elements, with a

## Malcolm's Virtual Life

The fascinating aspect of The Sims is that although you might try to create a character like yourself, there's every chance you won't stay that way for very long. I don't recognise myself any more...



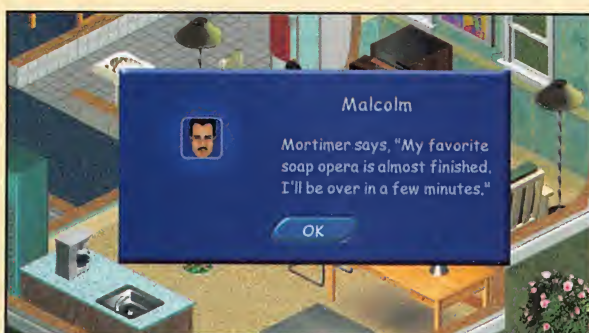
1. Bella came round, so I tried out a few of my best lines on her. Perhaps I went a little overboard on the Flirt option, though.



2. Rejection! She wasn't impressed, and soon left with Mortimer.



3. Depressed, I hit the drink, downing a sixpack that evening while lying in bed - all alone.



4. Come morning, however, and I decided to reinvent myself. Hello, Mortimer!

## LIVING IT UP IN THE SIMS

There are three gameplay modes in The Sims.

**Live Mode** is the main game mode, and it is from here that you guide your Sim through the trials and tribulations of life. Players can zoom into the action or out of it at will, as well as swing the perspective (so that nothing becomes hidden behind walls). Players can pause the action (stop the clock from ticking over) at anytime during the game. You spend most of your time in this mode.

**Buy Mode** pauses the game and brings up a list of items you can purchase to furnish your house. They range from beds to coffee machines, dishwashers to gym equipment, light bulbs to pot plants. Each of these items will have some sort of affect on the environment (and the room need), or can be used by the Sims with some positive (and possibly a negative) effect. Once purchased and your bank balance is duly adjusted, the item can be dragged, rotated and dropped into place in your virtual abode.

**Build Mode** is where you can make additions to your structure. From here you can add a story to your house, do some landscaping, install a pool, change the wallpaper, change the carpet and so forth. The game pauses when you go into this mode.



# Virtual Snapshot

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE SIMS



### Every picture tells a thousand words...

**1** Modern day masterpiece or morbid monstrosity? The choice is yours.

House layout and interior decorating plays an integral part in The Sims - poor design and positioning results in some unhappy Sims. Notice how they've all gone next door?

**2** Don't forget to tend to your garden - the moment a Sim steps out of their house for work (or school), an untidy (or worse, dead) surrounding landscape will negatively affect them - the outside is still considered a "room".

**3** Antique furniture. Most of the household items in the Sims

depreciate in value over time. Some items, however, increase in value. After some time, you can sell these items back for a tidy profit.

**4** This solitary Sim is doing the honky-tonk. Not only is playing the piano a fun pastime, it increases a Sim's creativity too.

**5** Oh look! Sim disco! With enough space and a decent stereo system, your Sims will get together and party! Watch the fun and social meters fly up!

**6** A pair of Sims having an argument. Over what, we shall never know.

Unfortunately, The Sims doesn't give you the option to push an irksome Sim into the pool Melrose Place style. Sigh.

**7** The old outdoor spa. A real crowd pleaser. Raises the social, fun and comfort meters.

**8** Kid's playset. Nude bathing in spas with your kids isn't exactly ideal in The Sims. Another way to increase their happiness is with one of these.

**9** Pinball! Put one of these machines in the home and watch the fun meter soar! Unfortunately, playing pinball is a solitary exercise.



## PICK A LIFE

Creating a character is dead easy.

1. First, choose the sex, size (whether child or adult) and skin (there are over a score for each age and sex to choose from). They range from the attractive to the offensive.
2. Name the blighter.
3. Choose your character's personality. You've points to distribute across the following categories: Neat, Outgoing, Active, Playful and Nice. Characters with average scores for each personality trait are the easiest to manage. Those with extreme traits are the most challenging. Personality traits affect a character's response to certain situations. An outgoing Sim needs plenty of social interaction. An active Sim won't get much value out of reading a book, while a character with few Neat points certainly won't mind sleeping amongst the trash.
4. Write a brief character bio.

Ta-da! You're now ready to move into the new neighbourhood. For future reference, your character will have been tagged with a star sign based upon the balance of traits selected. This should make dating in *The Sims* a breeze.

bit of philosophy and the glorious randomness of luck thrown in for good measure.

Maxis have done a splendid job of bringing an interpretation of life to the PC. One can't help but ask, though - just what is involved in a simulation of life? How much of the almost limitless sphere of experience do you pack into a CD's worth of gaming code, and how much of it do you exclude? Which aspects of life do you focus on, and which do you make transparent? How much of the character do you give to the player to control? And while we're at it, what's the meaning of life anyway?

### Sim House

According to Maxis - anything goes as long as you're happy. And while the game's structure isn't quite as "loose" as that (there are actually plenty of limitations imposed on the player), there is plenty of freedom within the game to keep players hopelessly addicted. However, to best appreciate what *The Sims* is all about, one must delve in to the mind of its creator, Will Wright, and

trace the origins of the game. Three years after Will had finished the multi-award winning *Sim City*, he began toying around with the idea of a house-building simulation. The type where you lovingly drag out the flat plan, paint the walls in the colour of your choice, and stock your creation with the latest in-vogue furniture. Citing "A Pattern Language" by Christopher Alexander as the major source of inspiration (these pages discussed design philosophy within the context of people, from creating cities to the effective design of a front porch), Will discovered that to best gauge the success of the design of the house, he'd have to populate the structure with virtual inhabitants. How else can you judge whether or not your freakish arrangement of art and furniture was actually inhabitable? So Will programmed in some characters with a basic range of emotional responses to smile and dance when they were satisfied with the design, and cry and throw tantrums if they found your creation unbearable.

This is where the game's

**Mr Daddy indulges in his favourite pastime - a spot of Nude Frontyard Bathing. Little does he understand that he has a greater chance of being arrested than picking up.**



## Dan's Virtual Life

I chose one of the predefined Sims characters, Mike Bachelor. Big mistake.



1. Ever eager to please, Mike takes Jenny a refreshing beverage.



2. Mike was so engrossed in *Tiberian Sun*, he didn't notice that the wall was missing.



3. Mike's fantasy comes to life, 'Weird Science' style.

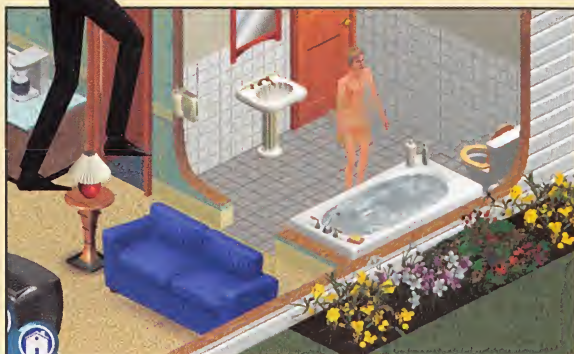


4. There's something strangely suspicious about men juggling for each other in the darkness.



## David's Virtual Life

I thought I'd create a Mr Average. Claiming the middle ground between Neatness and Untidiness, I tempered my ambivalence towards Activity with a considered indifference towards Niceness.



1. The day's off to an exciting start - bath time!



2. After work I whiled away the hours with a neighbourly acquaintance. Maybe next time she'll let me hold her hand!



3. I watched a bit of telly in the evening - that Funniest Home Videos always puts a smile on my face!



4. And after such a full day, what better way to unwind than tucked up in bed. Hmm, I think I'll paint the ceiling tomorrow!



Pools bring a lot of happiness to their users. The questions remains: would skinny-dipping be even more satisfying?

development took a sidestep from its original path - the team found the characters they created that much more fun to play with than the mere building aspect of the game.

So, gradually, Maxis added a greater range of actions and emotions to the characters till they reached a point where the game was more about its stars themselves than the setting they inhabited. Hence The Sims was born. However, The Sims hasn't strayed too far from its roots. While the game is focused heavily on the characters that populate it, house building and renovation still features heavily.

### Sim Life

Once you've created your alter ego (see Pick a Life on pg 61) it's time to get working, er... have some fun. Your Sims are capable of doing quite a bit. They can eat, sleep, tidy up, renovate, find a job and go to work (the most straightforward way to make money), learn new skills, play chess, take a bath, go for a swim, host a BBQ, dance along to the stereo, watch some TV, make their beds, take out the trash, read the newspaper, play computer games, pay the bills, prepare themselves meals, water the plants, read books, work on job promotions, take a day off work, and that's not even the half of it! They can also engage in socialising, which is perhaps the most amusing aspect of the game. The Sims speak their own language - a form of highly emotive gibberish. Thankfully though, the tone of the gibberish clearly represents the mood of the Sims (so you can tell whether you're hitting it off or taking a dive, big time), and Maxis were also thoughtful enough to include icons to represent what your characters are talking about (even though you can't choose the topic of conversation). The benefits of being social are obvious - you can find roommates or partners this way, which means you've got yourself either a double

income or a housekeeper for free.

### Needs and wants

But one question remains: what drives these virtual egos to go about their daily lives? Needs and happiness - it's as simple as that. Maxis have identified eight core needs of a Sim. They are hunger, energy, comfort, fun, hygiene, social, bladder, and room. These are all fairly self-explanatory, with the exception of room. The room need represents a Sim's affinity with the space around him or her. Should the room they are currently in be too small, house worn items (like dying plants) or not have enough light for example, this meter will drop. The room need is also the only meter that doesn't slowly degrade over time. The rest all do - and as their levels slowly drop, so does your overall mood until you hit depression. So to bring your character back into a happy state of being (a lot of game options are closed off while you are depressed, and you're more likely to be fired from your job and insult your friends in this state), you work on satiating these needs. To fix your hunger, you eat. To increase your energy, get a good night sleep or drink some coffee. For comfort, take a load off now and then and sit down. Fun can be fulfilled in a number of ways, and this depends greatly on your Sim's personality (a playful Sim would rather play computer games than read a book, for example). For hygiene take a shower and for your bladder, use the loo. Social is fixed by calling over your friends and neighbours for a bit of a chat (in reality it's more of a chore than anything else). Last but not least, the room meter can be changed by making sure you tidy up after yourself, and spend a bit of money on furnishings and house renovations (and interesting ones at that).

Sounds easy, right? Not quite. To make the game a bit more challenging, each action performed takes a certain period of time (and these are greatly





Alright, alright! We get the message! Hot tubs are the ultimate!

exaggerated) to perform. So while you're tending to one of your needs, others will start to depreciate. So the game clearly becomes a case of time management - carefully tending to each of your needs to ensure that your none of them dip too much into the red and start affecting your happiness. And this is ultimately what drives your Sims to better paid jobs - the ability to afford furnishings that tend to your needs far more efficiently than cheaper ones. For example, the \$4000 flat screen TV has a much greater effect on your fun meter than the measly \$50 black and white one has. Now that your needs are tended to more efficiently, you've more time to work on your skills so that you can get that promotion you've been eyeing, which in turn allows you to buy more furnishings which again tend your needs with greater efficiency so you've got more time to...

## Intuitive

Sounds a tad overwhelming, no? Never fear - the open-ended structure of the game is at once a great boon and The Sims' greatest flaw. The Sims is an intuitive game to play - the interface is simple and easy to understand. With the exception of the effect of dying (which isn't exactly easy to pull off - these guys don't die of disease or murder), success in The Sims is quite inevitable. There's no major way of bogging it up - and once you reach your highest paid job and have acquired the top of the range of home furnishings, there's little else for your Sim to do but to continue to exist in their lovely home (Sims can't actually leave their lots, meaning that you're pretty much stuck in the same house for good - unless you evict them). Not even socialising can lift The Sims from tedium at this stage - the character interaction system is more of a novelty than anything else, and as expected, novelties wear off fairly quickly. So The Sims becomes a mind-numbingly tedious affair of

sending your sim to the bathroom, to the kitchen and to bed, day in, day out.

There's nothing left to do at this stage but start from scratch and begin with another household. However the second time around, the hilarious character animations start to lose their appeal (these too are mostly novelty) and you're stuck repeating the same formula again to reach success. The only variation to this formula will depend on the personality traits you chose for your new Sim.

Reaching this point didn't end the love affair this reviewer had with The Sims. On the contrary, I simply scaled the proceedings back a bit. Rather than sustaining itself as a compelling game that could be played almost daily (this lasted a few weeks), The Sims becomes a game which is to be truly savoured on the occasion (escaping from the real thing is as good a reason as any). Thankfully, The Sims is almost fully customisable - with character skins, wallpapers, sounds and items easily created. This is one game that may surpass even the mighty Quake in the modification stakes. And given Maxis' commitment to support The Sims with regular official downloads from their website, I eagerly await what The Sims may become

## Nothing like it

The Sims really could have been so much more - but to further push the boundaries beyond what it already is might have kept this game on the future release schedule for years to come. That said, Maxis should be applauded for creating one of the most original, engaging, satisfying, thought-provoking, frustrating, boring and sublimely



Choose a ready made family...



...or create your very own.



Choose your character traits wisely.



The Sims in Buy Mode.

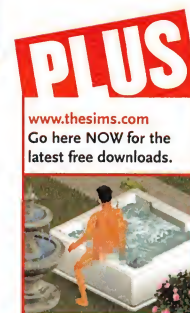


The Sims in Build Mode.

interesting games I've played in eons.

The Sims is a fantastic gaming experience that will reward you in an amount directly proportional to the effort invested in it. Long live Maxis!

March Stepnik



PCPP

**FOR:** Fantastic character and open-ended gameplay. Completely unique.

**AGAINST:** Can be tedious at times. Much of The Sims relies on novelty, which can wear thin rather quickly.

90



# FINAL FANTASY VIII

●Genre: RPG ●Players: 1 ●Developer: Squaresoft ●Publisher: Eidos Interactive ●Distributor: OziSoft ●Price: \$TBA ●Rating: PG ●Available: Now  
 ●Need: ●Want: PIII, 128 Meg RAM, TNT2 or equivalent ●URL: www.squaresoft.com

FANTASTIC STORY, SHAME ABOUT THE CONVERSION THOUGH...

## TIPS

- Always save whenever you can. There's almost always an instance where you want to backtrack to find a special item you missed.
- Exploit the Draw System. You can cast the spell straight after you've drawn it, but it's far greater value to stockpile the spells, which you can get up to 8 at a time. Far greater value.
- Talk to everyone. You're always bound to stumble across a secret item from them.
- Don't just Junction your basic abilities. Be sure to Junction spells to your character attributes. That way, your every attack might be combined with fire, or your body will be less vulnerable to ice and water, and so on.
- There's a lot of character switching, so make sure your characters are Junctioned right. It's pretty embarrassing when the new character in your team only has the one basic "Attack" move and nothing else.



One of FFB's coolest features is the combination of playable sequences over the top of streaming FMV. It's a shame we didn't get a shot of one, though.



"Final Fantasy" is a name that enjoys the distinction of being one of those proverbial 'household names' amongst console owners. Having originated from the earliest days of 8-bit console gaming, it has enjoyed ever-increasing success with each successive chapter - now numbering at eight with this latest addition. Final Fantasy VIII was understandably cause for great excitement for our console-gaming siblings. On the PC, however, it's a slightly different story. As far as many of us are concerned, the series isn't more than a couple of years old given

that its PC debut started at the seventh installment...

### It's a love story

Final Fantasy VIII is a completely independent story. It's not a continuation of anything, nor does it have any kind of connection to the previous seven FF games - at least not plot-wise. Putting you in the shoes of a young military cadet at a 'special forces' academy, the game begins with a breathtaking FMV sequence of a frighteningly intense duel being played out between two classmates. You are Squall Leonheart, an

introverted yet talented young man who is about to graduate to become a member of the prestigious mercenary group, SeeD. Your specialty is the Gunblade, a powerful close-combat weapon considered to be the most difficult to master. And you've just been beaten by a snotty-nosed rival in your class.

Taking on almost an identical structure to FFBVII, FFBVIII takes you through an uncompromisingly linear fantasy tale. Linear or not, however, the tale is imaginative, emotive, and inspirational; taking you beyond the usual "we have to save the world" spiel





The graphics are so gorgeous, you'll hardly notice the, er... "engaging" dialogue.

by threading a number of concurrent plots that tease the mind with romance, rivalry, betrayal, and revenge. It does so by using the classic storytelling formula of expanding from the microworld into the macroworld, thrusting our young SeeD graduate into a vast world of new people, new cities, and ever-growing responsibilities to both his client and his morals. From there, we begin to see greater conspiracies unravel before us, whilst at the same time we fall in love with certain characters hand-in-hand with Squall.

Like the previous game, the story is conveyed mostly through pre-rendered bitmaps, upon which your 3D-modelled character can be navigated. With a little camera trickery, this creates an excellent, albeit artificial 3D look. Any time you encounter a monster or enemy soldier, you'll be whisked away to a 3D arena in which you fight, cast incredible spells, and whatever else it takes to defeat your opponent. At key points in the game, you'll be rewarded with one of the game's beautifully rendered cut-scenes. They move the story along, and they now appear much more frequently than in the last game.

### Converted?

A number of subtle but nevertheless welcome changes have been made to the graphical presentation. First of all, the characters are now more realistically modeled. That is, as opposed to the big-headed stumpy-limbed anime characters of the previous game. They also feature

traditional texture maps instead of gouraud shading. Another new feature that adds some cinematic value to the game is the use of simulated camera focus. The final and perhaps most impressive new feature is how in some scenes, the programmers have mapped playable characters on top of a looping FMV (such as a crowd), which adds greatly to the usually static atmosphere.

Unfortunately, while these graphical effects may have worked well on a television screen through a PlayStation, they simply don't cut the mustard on the PC. Running at a maximum resolution of 640x480, the pre-



**"...A 3D ARENA IN WHICH YOU FIGHT, CAST INCREDIBLE SPELLS..."**

rendered backgrounds look nowhere near as refined as promised, appearing blurry and horribly pixellated throughout. This can even be observed in the battle scenes, where the decidedly jagged outline of a mountain sticks out in distinctly in the horizon. Admittedly, the 3D-accelerated buildings that you encounter from time to time aren't bad, but it's of little consolation. Even the character costumes look awful when close-up.

Now let's say, in the interests of fairness, we think "well, it is just a conversion of a PlayStation game, after all. Hiccups like these are understandable".

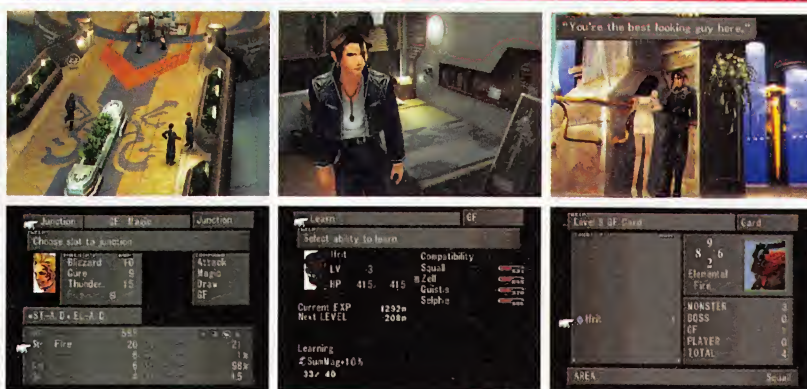
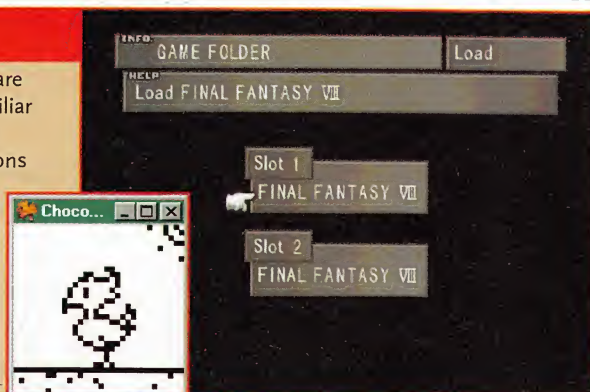


## THE FULL PSX EXPERIENCE

It's interesting to see how much of a direct port Final Fantasy VIII is from its PlayStation counterpart. For instance, when you try to save your game, the menu screen prompts you for whether you want to save your data to "Slot 1" or "Slot 2", as though there's a port we can plug a memory card into. The keyboard controls are also a direct port from the PlayStation game. The PC instruction manual gives you a specific set of functions for each key that is analogous to,

say, the PlayStation's triangle and square buttons. Funnily enough, if you're familiar with the PlayStation controls, you can execute some menu and action functions that aren't even listed for the PC version. And finally, there's the pointless Chocobo Mini-game, which appeared on a PDA device for the PlayStation, which in turn isn't even available outside of Japan.

**Silly Chocobo mini-games**



(left) The 3D World Map in all its accelerated glory - ugh.

You'll be recanting those words when you see what a sloppy mess of 3D-accelerated tiles the World Map is made of. For the icing on the cake, switch the message text font to 'hi-res' mode to see just how patronisingly huge it remains.

### MIDI trash

Speaking of text, FFXVIII is loaded with it. It's not so much the amount of reading involved that's offensive about this text. It's the fact that there isn't one ounce of sampled speech to speak of. Considering the amount of speech offered in other RPGs, FFXVIII falls well below the accepted benchmarks in terms of sound. This extends, too, to the in-game music, of which FFXVIII is solely reliant on to create any sense of excitement in the game. Squaresoft's original musical score was actually not bad, and Eidos were supposedly going to 'improve' it. They should have done everyone a favour and left it alone, because this new version couldn't sound more like MIDI-trash if it tried. Considering that the original music composer, Nobuo Uematsu, has released a fully-orchestrated album of FFXVIII's musical score, it's inexcusable: firstly, for the music to be so bad; and secondly, for such an appallingly half-arsed bastardisation to be created from music that's compositionally quite good.

### Deja-vu

In terms of control and gameplay, FFXVIII is virtually identical to the

previous game. That is, you wander from town to town, speaking to the right people, acquiring objects and valuables from them, and generally move from one location to the next as a means of stirring the plot along. At key points in the game, you'll encounter a boss character of some description, which you'll have to defeat. And whilst you are exploring, talking, and exploring some more, you'll face numerous unavoidable "random" battles with baddies who want to do you in. During these encounters, you take turns selecting one of your abilities such as "Attack", "Use Item", "Guardian Force Attack", and so on.

These abilities are made possible through the Junction System - one of the only new control features in the game - which determines exactly what your characters can do. Basically, you "junction" a Guardian Force (equivalent of an elemental in FFXVII) to a character. That character will then have a series of abilities that can be activated, and the Guardian Force in turn will gain experience with each battle, earning extra abilities like increased magical attack power, and so on.

This new method of character management is all very fun and all, but

its utility is significantly unbalanced by the inclusion of a new "Draw System". That is, you have an unlimited ability to suck magic spells out of your enemies. There's no limit on this feature, so you can draw spells out of your opponents with gay abandon. This kind of invitation to exploitation, combined with the frustratingly random nature of the battles, doesn't make for very satisfying gameplay.

### Falls short

In summation, Final Fantasy VIII fails to impress on two counts. Firstly, for the pure PC gamer, this game reeks of linear, low-res, shallow gameplay bollocks. Games like The Nomad Soul are infinitely superior. Secondly for those who've seen it on the PlayStation, this PC version should have offered a great deal more improvement than what we've seen. In terms of overall satisfaction and entertainment, it doesn't even come close to the PlayStation version. At least on television at a lower resolution, we can't see the ugly jagged lines quite as clearly.

Anything less than an improvement would have been disappointing. This was worse.

**Kevin Cheung**

**PCPP**

**FOR:** Excellent story, wonderful atmosphere, and great cinematics - assuming you can get into the low-res graphics.

**AGAINST:** Uninspiring graphics, shitty music, repetitive and frustratingly random gameplay.

**PLUS**  
[www.squaresoft.com/web/games/ff8pc/index.html](http://www.squaresoft.com/web/games/ff8pc/index.html)

You don't even have to buy FF8 to play Chocobo World. Sqaure are offering it for free from this website. While you're there, check out the slew of other cool FF8-related downloads for you PC.



**77**



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# SLAVE ZERO

●Genre: Console Blastfest ●Players: 1-8 ●Developer: Infogrames ●Publisher: Infogrames ●Distributor: Ozisoft ●Price: \$79.95 ●Rating: M ●Available: Now  
 ●Need: P233, 32MB RAM, 3D Card, 230MB HD ●Want: PII 300, 64MB RAM, TNT2 3D Card, 300MB HD ●URL: www.slavezero.com

A DECENT ACTION GAME LACKING SOME MUCH NEEDED POLISH.  
 AND IT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH BOBA, OKAY?

## TIPS

- As in all FPS, use of the mouse is imperative. Equally useful is a mastery of circle strafing. Used effectively, the circle strafing technique will, for the most part, keep you out of trouble.
- Missiles are best saved for use against bosses, though they also prove useful against static targets like Sentinels perched atop structures.
- Although buildings provide excellent cover, be sure not to remain in close proximity as they come under sustained fire. The resulting explosion will inflict splash damage on anything nearby.

Capitalising on the innate human interest in the concept of cybernetics, *Slave Zero* is set 500 years in the future, at a time when such technology has gained community-wide acceptance and become a part of everyday life. It is during this era that Megacity SI-9 lies under the control of the Sovereign Khan (SovKhan), a despot determined to crush all resistance to his dominion. In order to cement his control over the city, the SovKhan creates an army of Slaves: titanic 60-foot-tall cybernetic behemoths spawned in gestation chambers from an arcane fusion of human embryos, cybernetic exoskeletons and the mysterious substance known as "dark matter". The player assumes the role of Chan, the only member of an insurgent group, The Protectorate, with the mental fortitude to control *Slave Zero*. The titular hero is a Slave stolen from the SovKhan's labs. As per usual, *Slave Zero* (under the control of Chan) is The Protectorate's only hope of toppling the SovKhan's totalitarian regime.

### A walking arsenal

Being an action title, much of *Slave Zero*'s missions consist of blasting everything in sight en route to a specific goal that must be destroyed within a certain time. Escort and rescue missions round out the remainder, with the action punctuated by several boss fight missions over the course of the game. Because of *Slave Zero*'s size, he is able to carry vast quantities of weapons and ammunition. Having a walking armoury at the player's disposal is one of the game's strong points, as is the wide variety of weapons. Early on in the game, simplistic machine guns and other



"...BEST ENJOYED IN SMALL ONE OR TWO HOUR DOSES."



Otto Tosse and the old Telstra symbol? Hmmm....

ballistic weapons form the bulk of *Slave Zero*'s arsenal, but guided missiles, a plasma cannon and much more powerful weapons of mass destruction do become available.

### Mechanical arthritis

Animations are smooth and, on the whole, quite impressive. Thanks to the use of motion capture technology, *Slave Zero* moves with a convincing, almost simian gait that accentuates his sheer size and tremendous weight. Further highlighting his bulk is the way in which

he moves into a crouch to absorb the impact of jumps from great heights. The raw power of such a being is further emphasised by the way *Slave Zero* slowly flexes his colossal hands, a pleasing effect that instantly conveys an impression of an impatient predator eager for the challenge and the adrenaline rush of the hunt. Despite his ponderous dimensions and astounding tonnage, *Slave Zero* is remarkably agile, courtesy of thrusters on his back that give momentum to jumps and enable him to strafe effectively.



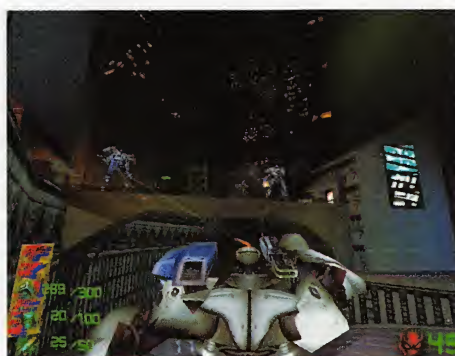




This is what happens when you don't wash under your arms for weeks on end.



Oh Slave, you're our hero!



Contrasting greatly with the flawless animations of Slave Zero and many of his opponents are those of the military and civilian vehicles within Megacity Sr-9 and its environs. Default movement and flight animations are acceptable, but death animations are unconvincing and seem very rushed. There are also numerous debris and clipping bugs that become glaringly apparent from the game's outset. God is, as they say, in the details and in the case of Slave Zero, it's these incidental details which let the game down. The stunning environments and scores of people going about their daily business are all for naught: any suspension of disbelief is abruptly terminated upon sight of these atrocious animations.

### A quickie

Having been simultaneously released on the Dreamcast, it is obvious that Slave Zero was designed from the ground up to cater for the 'just got home from the pub' and 'action junky' ends of the market. Graphically, this is one console title that translates very well to the PC. Unfortunately, the post-pub market in the PC gaming realm is almost non-existent. And even serious action junkies will find it difficult to commit to Slave Zero for very long. Such is the nature of the game, that it is best enjoyed in small

## BIG AND BEASTLY

The game's sense of scale is, indeed, quite impressive. Slave Zero towers over much of the cityscape, dwarfing even the largest of military and civilian vehicles. In this respect, AI responses to Slave Zero's presence are reasonably accurate. Stepping into rush hour traffic, numerous hover vehicles are inadvertently (or deliberately, as the case may be) crushed, with oncoming drivers careening out of control in an attempt to escape a similar fate. Unfortunately, opponent AI is far less impressive, with enemies sorely lacking in the self-preservation department.



one or two hour doses. But even within such a compressed time frame, tedium quickly sets in. Deathmatch-only multiplayer does little to alleviate this significant flaw. It is for this reason that Slave Zero will fail to elicit an enthusiastic response from even the

most casual of gamers. This predicament is reinforced by the fact that ancient titles like G-Police, with similar themes and environments, have done a markedly superior job. For the giant-robot-obsessed only!

Brett Robinson

## PLUS

[www.venus.co.uk/vlib/cybernetics.html](http://www.venus.co.uk/vlib/cybernetics.html)  
The W3 Virtual Library of Cybernetics  
Links to web sites covering cybernetics and related technologies.  
Information on companies, research grants, publications, organisations, conferences and more.



PCPP

**FOR:** Above average graphics, impressive Slave Zero animations and cool weapons.

**AGAINST:** Against: Rushed environmental animations, glaring bugs and extremely limited longterm value

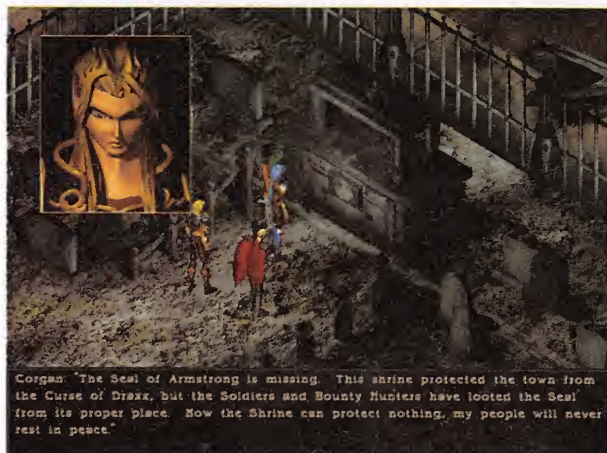
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# SEPTERRA CORE

●Genre: RPG/Adventure ●Players: 1 ●Developer: Valkyrie Studios ●Publisher: Monolith ●Distributor: Jack of All Games ●Price: \$89.95 ●Rating: G8+ ●Available: Now  
 ●Need: P200, 32MB RAM, 4x CDROM ●Want: P233, 64MB RAM, 8x CDROM, 150MB HDD space ●URL: www.septerra.com

USING THE SAME FORMULA WHICH MADE THE FINAL FANTASY SERIES SUCH A HIT, THIS ANIME RPG DOES IT BETTER.



"Go Vicky! Go Vicky! Go Vicky!", slowly the chant winds down and a bubbly and rotund talk show host appears in the audience. "Today's show is: You Might Be a Power-hungry Madman, But I Still Love You."

"Our first guests have come all the way from Septerra." Wild applause.

"Now, Selina, Doskias is trying to have you killed, start several wars and steal the energy of your entire world and you still love him..."

"He did raise me up out of the gutter, love me and make me a General..."

"He should have left murderous filth like you where he found you!" cries a devastatingly spiky-haired knight as he leaps from his plastic chair.

Vicky turns to Corgan: "I understand that you're a little annoyed because Selina attacked your home city killing your friends and family... Maya, as the woman who keeps these guys working together and the rest of your warring band from killing each other long enough to vent on the real bad guy here, Doskias - do you have anything to say?"

The blue-haired beauty sighs, "I was

**Our favourite bit in any RPG - playing dressups with the character dolls!**

just minding my business and then, what do you know? I'm the central figure in saving all of Septerra. Can I go now? There's a madman out there..."

## Anime Action Activate

The set up of Septerra Core is more or less like that sans the Vicky Drake Show, which might have clashed with the finely honed feel of the game.

Septerra Core captures the feel of Japanese animation superbly, probably being one of the best examples of the genre Americans have ever produced. The characters, the over-the-top action and locations, from the undead-besieged kingdom to the hardcore cyberpunk cities at war, is all spot-on.

The storyline is interesting, epic, and fun to watch in motion. Although Septerra Core is pretty linear, the desire to see what happens next is enough to drive you on, fight to fight, cool setting to cool setting, puzzle to puzzle. Speaking of, there are a lot of puzzles in this game. Septerra Core is definitely

an RPG-cum-Adventure game. Every map has to be carefully explored and every item has to be picked up. Key items are fairly easy to spot and puzzles test your logic more than your patience, and hence works pretty well with the more standard RPG elements such as character experience, fast pace, buying and upgrading your toys, magic points and so on.

## Core Gameplay

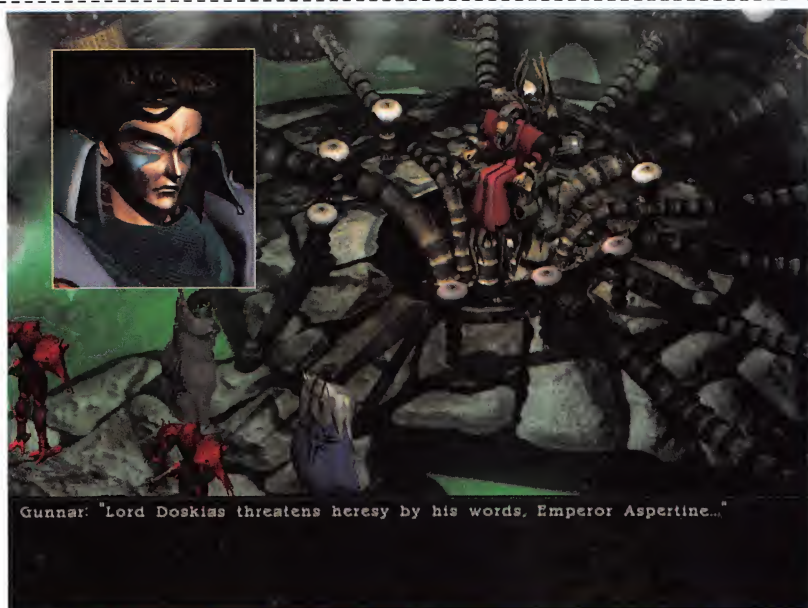
Gameplay, in general, is fairly simple. Maya and her two active companions (out of her final crew of eight) run around a world map until they come to an adventuring site where the map changes to the isometric view through which they find items, solve puzzles, talk to people and fight.

These fights are done in a turn-based system using "endurance bars" which fill up in realtime, only pausing when you select a character to act. Each character has three sections in their endurance bar, and the more segments

## TIPS

- Key items can be found in the shops. Keep an eye out for usual items, they are usually there for a reason. On rare occasions, some items can be used in an amazing practical way, even if they just seem to be another power-up.
- Don't get side tracked - you have to save the world (in the right order).





You could cut yourself on those cheekbones.

they wait to fill, the stronger the act or the more complex the action they may make. Fighting is a tactical affair with each character having pronounced strengths and weaknesses as well as special abilities and unique attacks.

Character balance is complex. Badu and Runner, who kick the most arse in

The most annoying aspect of this is the repetition: most of the monsters respawn in exactly the same place in the formation when you revisit a map. The fights are all pretty quick, except for when bosses are involved, so this isn't so bad, but some random action would have been a nice change of pace.

## "...CAPTURES THE FEEL OF JAPANESE ANIMATION SUPERBLY..."

combat, are balanced by the fact they're useless off the field of battle - while Grubb, for example, is a pantie-waist but excels at getting technical information and is needed to solve many machine-based puzzles. Having the right guys on hand is all-important but it's not as hard as it sounds. The game usually lets you know if someone will be required, and if you make a bad call going back across the world map (and a few adventure maps) is the sum of your punishment.

### Sailing the Seven Shells

The world of Septerra is varied and detailed, with a real sense of history and backstory. Exploring the many lands is a task that should keep you up night after night if you have any anime or RPG tendencies.

## DEALING OUT FATE

The magic system in Septerra Core is both flexible and simple, as well as being pretty cool. Players get Fate Cards, each representing a specific spell effect like Hydro attack, Summon Bowman (a warrior), healing or creating a magical barrier. Where the system starts to get funky is that certain cards can be combined to generate new twists on the standard effects.

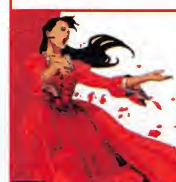
For example, healing combines with barrier to make a barrier against undead, and Summon combined with Hydro attack summons the Queen of the Seas to smite your foes. Up to three cards can be used at once, new cards keep popping up and an increasing level of "core energy" means that new combinations just keep coming right to the last.



A game for fairies? No, not quite.

**PLUS**

Check out the Oz perspective on anime at [www.anime.com.au](http://www.anime.com.au), for places to shop and links to follow.



Timothy C. Best

PCPP

**FOR:** A strong RPG with interesting puzzle elements thrown in.

**AGAINST:** The same monsters respawning in the same place every time have to return to a map can be a tad repetitive.

84



# SPEED DEMONS

●Genre: Action Racer ●Players: 1-6 ●Developer: EMG ●Publisher: Microids ●Distributor: Jack of all Games ●Price: \$69.95 ●Rating: G8+ ●Available: Now  
 ●Need: P200, 32MB RAM, 4MB 3D Video Card, 30MB HD ●Want: PII 300, 64MB, realistic physics ●URL: www.microids.com

TRUE TO ITS TITLE, THIS ARCADE RACER OFFERS A TREMENDOUS SENSATION OF SPEED. BUT SADLY, NOT MUCH ELSE...

Archie Brownback takes up the commentary:

"There's the race leader, Randy Simons... he's turned the corner and is into the straight... he passes the overturned tanker, avoiding the canisters... oh look, he's ploughed into a cow! No two cows!!... but WELL recovered! He's not the champion for nothing, you know... Reminds me of earlier in the series, where Randy savaged a number of skiers on his way down the closing stretch... didn't lose his composure there either..."

Sound ridiculous? Well, it sounds fine to me. I must say that I love a good action racer. Like professional wrestling, the only thing you're looking for in these racing titles is glitz and great fun. None of this fancy simulation nonsense (compare to Greco-Roman wrestling) - just lots of excitement, in the forms of ridiculous jumps, reckless driving and thrilling speed. It's a good thing novelty racing titles are pretty much coming out of our ears, then. Racing generally is a pretty healthy genre, there's enough for all tastes.

## Slow and steady?

Speed Demons offers lots of speed. Yes indeed, speed galore - I can't remember a game where you travel quite so fast! Even Rollcage, which I loved (90%, PCPP #38), was a little slower than this game. The tracks are fairly simple layout-wise, but become interesting enough due to the racing speeds. To this end, Speed Demons is a fun game. As in many games of this type, there's a lot of interesting scenery for you to drive through (or around if you wish), like stray petrol drums, animals, hapless passers-by and plant life. You'll get a good chuckle anyway. Pounding along trying to avoid targets in your way is where this game is at its best.

And sadly that's about it. There's not a lot else to like about Speed Demons. The physics model isn't particularly good, even for a dramatic action title. In



Wild and wacky racing.



isolated circumstances, it works well. For example, if you nudge a big obstacle, you'll slowly turn and lose control. In a pack situation though, anything can happen and it feels like it! Much of the time, there is very little realism to speak of, apart from the excessive speed that I've already mentioned.

## No-Frills brand

Even worse, the game has very little character. A game like MarioKart has a definite feel about it - you know who the racers are, the artwork is very particular, the driving has a certain feel. Well, Speed Demons doesn't have any

of that, just a generic blandness about it instead. The music is your standard rock soundtrack and it's well on the annoying side. Add to this, erratic respawning of your vehicle, the fact that your settings aren't remembered every time you restart the game and the periodic crashes, and you begin to see my point.

At its best, Speed Demons offers thrilling racing. For the most part however, it's a fairly sloppy package that lacks charm and polish. Hardly the worst racing title I've seen (two words: Boss Rally) but certainly not a stand out of the genre.

John Dewhurst

**PLUS**  
[www.aggressivedriving.org/](http://www.aggressivedriving.org/)

"Citizens Against Speeding and Aggressive Driving is a non-profit, non-partisan grassroots organization dedicated to making the roads safe for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists alike. Our mission is to reduce auto-related deaths and injuries by eliminating speeding and aggressive driving, and to offer assistance to victims of car crashes and their families." Says it all, really.



PCPP

**FOR:** This is about as fast as P.C. racing gets!

**AGAINST:** Against: Completely lacking in character, physics of driving is poor, fairly unstable.

55



Pioneer

**FX #12**  
**Mind Blowing**



The MOSFET45 power chip, built into all new Pioneer CD Tuners.



# INTERSTATE '82

●Genre: Driving Action ●Players: 1-6 ●Developer: Activision ●Publisher: Activision ●Distributor: Activision ●Price: \$79.95 ●Rating: MA ●Available: Now  
 ●Need: 3D Video Card, P233, Win95/98, 400MB HD, 64MB RAM ●Want: PII 300, 128MB RAM ●URL: www.activision.com

THE EIGHTIES WAS THE DECADE OF "CRAP SEQUELS". HOW FITTING THEN, THAT THIS SEQUEL LIVES UP TO ITS' NAMESAKE.

## TIPS

- Keep your eye out for cars just lying around. Often times you can upgrade your "ride" and you'd be a fool not to. Missions can be almost impossible if you don't do the trade in.
- When tailing someone, don't hover too close, since you'll become the victim of their weapons. Keep them in your radar and keep your distance.
- Unless you have the opportunity to pin another car against a wall, don't try to ram other cars - you invariably do more damage to your own car than your enemy's!



Crucial 80s Album #1: Duran Duran 'Arena'

The 1980s means lots of things to lots of people: Caddyshack, Family Ties, bubble skirts, big suits, skinny ties, Countdown, Bob Hawke. But for most of us looking back, from the inside of a new century, the 80s also means something else: awkward music. Retro, yes indeed: it's cool because it's SOOO uncool: Duran Duran, Gary Glitter, Soft Cell, Cyndi Lauper. Yeah well, just leave me out of that sham, alright? It's a good thing that games aren't tempted by this foolishness... or so I thought.

### Pink sweatbands

Yeah well, fair enough, nostalgia can take strange forms. Interstate '76 at least made sense - the '70s was all about jive-talkin', big hair, fast cars and umm, funk music. What in the hell was the '80s about? Synthesisers and teased hair, that's what. Interstate '82

is a hell of a hard stylistic thing to pull off, since the 80s - let's face it - was such an ugly era.

So it was with hesitation that I took my first glimpse of Interstate '82. The early signs are quite promising: an intro that sets up an intriguing situation where our hero, Taurus (hustler, driver and A-grade Samuel L. Jackson look-alike) searches for his old comrade, Groove Champion, who has disappeared under suspicious circumstances. With Skye, Groove's sister along for the ride, the scene is set for a sequel with a difference, looking to tread some new ground in the Interstate world.

### Devofied

There's a lot that works in Interstate '82. Despite my misgivings about the 1980s, the music (some of it done by Devo) and styling is effective and entertaining in conveying the era. You'll be reminded of such classics as Magnum P.I. or Hawaii 5-0 (if you're

old enough). More importantly, the play of the narrative is well staged between missions. Skye's interest in her brother's safety and Taurus' reluctant coming out of retirement, makes for interesting characters. For all its cheesiness, Interstate '82 avoids the corn and the story is quite believable.

The control of the cars is a good combination of realism and simplicity. You can get straight into it and start driving around and shootin' stuff up! This is a good example of fun, accessible gaming. And there's quite a bit of variety as far as transportation goes. You can drive the flashy weapons-fitted vehicles of your team or your enemy or any number of other vehicles like civilian vehicles, police cars, buses, etc. There's also the option to outfit your vehicle with specialised weapons, giving you lots of variety in destruction.

### Underpopulated

Now to the bad news: the realism of the missions is fairly non-existent. The





Crucial 80s Album #2: The Human League 'Dare'

Crucial 80s Album #3: ABC 'The Lexicon of Love'



**"WHAT IN THE HELL WAS THE 80'S ABOUT? SYNTHESISERS AND TEASED HAIR..."**

#### SouHess

As it stands, Interstate '82 is just another mission-based driving shooter with a (good) narrative told with cutscenes. There's the usual array of set pieces like tailing, protection and diversions - some of them work well, some of them don't. The '80s flavour is a novelty that could ice the cake of a great game, but it doesn't save an ordinary one. I wonder what would have happened if Interstate '82 had used one of these newer driving engines (no pun intended) - a much more realistic game for a start. We can only lament what might have been because Interstate '82 is just another action driving game, nothing more.

John Dewhurst

reasons are varied and related. For one, you rarely see any pedestrians - ANYWHERE. The only people you see on foot are baddies who've fled from wrecked vehicles and yourself when you change vehicles. I mean, honestly - one of the levels is set in a shopping mall in the middle of the desert. What is a shopping mall doing in the desert? Why is there no-one in the shopping mall? Why is there no stock in any of the stores? Even when you drive through a city at night, there's no-one to be seen. Oftentimes, the game lacks any kind of immersive flair. When you get out into the countryside and there aren't any people it makes sense but otherwise, it just doesn't work.

Being able to change cars mid-mission is great and important in Interstate '82, but the firstperson control of your man, Taurus, is just terrible. The gaming public, being

acquainted with the best that FPS has to offer, deserves a little better than this! Woe betide anyone if they ever need to actually shoot someone on foot - the thirdperson character controls are just incredibly shoddy.

The ingame visuals, too, are decidedly average for a game released in 2000. It's a pity when you have games like Midtown Madness that do the ambience of a city really well, and then you have Interstate '82 that doesn't look that good at all. All of this is a shame because the story, music and flavour work well. However, the gameplay IS the game and for this reason Interstate '82 is just plain average.

**PCPP**

**FOR:** Nice story. Interesting themes but only just passable action.

**AGAINST:** Lacks any realism. Controls tend from the average to awful. Poor graphics

**PLUS**

Here's as good a reason as any to be thankful that the '80s are in the distant past: Poison's 1988 album, "Open Up and say Aah!!". Featuring such stellar hits as "Fallen Angel" and "Every Rose Has its Thorn". Cheers to Basil for the tape copy of this - it's a dog and now it's in the bin!



**60**



# JANE'S F/A-18 HORNET

●Genre: Modern Fighter Sim ●Players: 1-8 ●Developer: Jane's ●Publisher: Electronic Arts ●Distributor: Electronic Arts ●Price: \$89.95 ●Rating: TBA ●Available: Now  
 ●Need: P266, 64MB RAM, 350MB HDD, 4MB Videocard (D3D) ●Want: PIII 450, 128MB RAM, 720MB HDD, 16MB Videocard (D3D) ●URL: www.janes.ea.com

IGNORING THEIR HARDCORE-ONLY REPUTATION, JANE'S PRODUCE AN ACCESSIBLE FLIGHT SIM THAT EVERYONE CAN ENJOY.

## TIPS

- Take advantage of the training missions. F/A-18 is a complex simulation and they offer the best means of mastering the basics.
- HUDs and MDIs can be accessed while the game is paused - take advantage of this until you find your wings.
- Use the Mission Builder to practice air-to-air and air-to-ground tactics, trying out various types of weapons against sitting ducks until you're comfortable with the interface.
- Continually cycle through the MDIs in-flight to get a feel for all systems on the aircraft. Mastering the MDIs is the key to F/A-18 at the higher difficulty levels.
- Listen to the chatter around you and regularly check the status of the other aircraft in your flight. A lot of useful information will be communicated verbally, and casualties can mount up quickly in some scenarios.



After a bit of a lean period, jet sims have come back with a vengeance. Recent months have given us the chance to savour the innovation and raw excitement of Rowan's MiG Alley, the quality graphics of SSI's SU-27 Flanker, and the technical precision of Jane's USAF. In F/A-18, Jane's has made a good stab at capturing all three elements in the one title, putting to rest any concerns that their reputation for realism has to come at the expense of gameplay. F/A-18 has everything a hardcore simmer could ask for, in a package that also offers the fast-paced action, simplicity and atmosphere necessary to make it accessible to a wider market. Veterans of Jane's F15 will feel comfortable with the interface, but be in no doubt that this is a whole new game!

### Warning! Acronyms

As a Super Hornet driver aboard the USS Ronald Reagan's Carrier Air Wing (CVW), you are tasked with conducting air superiority and strike missions in support of the Carrier Battle Group (CVBG). One full-length and three mini-campaigns are available, covering NATO's response to a hypothetical Russian civil war. Twenty single missions can be flown, and all scenarios are supported by the credible storylines and comprehensive briefings we've come to expect from Jane's.



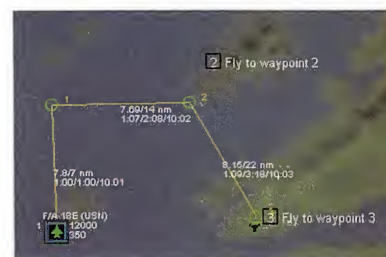
Ah, the old flour up the exhaust pipe trick, again.

Armchair Aces also have the option of jumping straight into configurable quick action scenarios, while timid Top Guns can work their way through the first-class training tutorials.

F/A-18's gameplay is quality all the way, with page one of the manual throwing you straight into an introductory mission. And it's user-friendly - sixty seconds after the intro sequence you've splashed your first MiG and bombed a fuel dump! Once the first buzz of excitement wears off, the true depth of the simulation becomes apparent, along with the terrific range of player options available. Surprisingly for a Jane's title, the documentation isn't

quite as helpful as it should be, with the attempt to mimic a real flight manual occasionally getting in the way of teaching players how to fly from a desk.

Key elements of the flight model can be simplified for new players, including



Waypoints. No, really, that's all there is.





Major Des chases a missile.



Virtual instrumentation in your virtual cockpit.

## WHAT'S YOUR POISON?

The Super Hornet packs a devastating punch against both air and ground targets. Jane's have modelled the performance of the various weapon systems in terrific detail, and quick selection of the right weapon can be crucial to mission success. AIM-120 missiles, fitted with their own radar, are perfect for engaging aircraft from beyond visual range, while the radar guided AIM-7 Sparrows cover mid-range combat. If things are close, then the 'fire and forget' AIM-9 Sidewinder or the M61A1 20 millimetre cannon may do the trick. Once the air threat is out of the way, ground targets can be destroyed by guided or unguided weapons, including iron bombs, rockets, and laser or TV guided ordnance. The weapon system interface provided in F/A-18 is as real as you are likely to get, with selection and control managed through a combination of MDIs, HUDs and joystick commands.



## "...AN UNENDING STREAM OF RADIO CHATTER, COMPUTER PROMPTS AND WARNING SIGNALS..."

take-offs, landings, aircraft vulnerability and flight physics. This approach allows you to experience the excitement of a night carrier landing, for example, without having to endlessly repeat the mission. As your confidence grows, you can gradually up the pace until the whole thing is in your own hands. And you'll need big hands as you come to grips with the full range of offensive and defensive systems that ship with a Super Hornet.

### Perfect immersion

Jane's set a high standard for cockpit detail in USAF, but F/A-18 has raised the mark once again. With only one aircraft to model this time around, they've done a superb job with the cockpit, both functionally and graphically. Almost all functions can be accessed in the game, either by mouse-click or keyboard commands, and panning around the interior of your 'office' to try it all out is half the fun! The Head Up Display (HUD) is particularly well handled, and moving through each of the displays is simplified by a straightforward and logical keyboard layout. Jane's has

attempted to match the interface as closely as possible to the real thing, and the range of realistic configuration options is nothing short of remarkable.

F/A-18 flies like a dream, and a fast-paced atmosphere and a real sense of mission support the flight model. I was particularly impressed by the cumulative effect of damage and by the feel of 'low and slow' flight, both of which are poorly handled in some jet sims. Even with autopilot selected, pilots have a myriad of systems to monitor, and you'll find yourself continually cycling through various Multipurpose Display Indicators (MDIs) to check the latest info on the electronic warfare (EW) threat, weapon status, fuel and built in test (BIT) results. Once the action heats up, an unending stream of radio chatter, computer prompts and warning signals will keep you on the edge of your seat as you manoeuvre to engage the enemy.

### It's in the details

This game is also a joy to watch, sporting top-notch graphics for both aircraft and terrain modelling. Ground targets and ships are not of the same standard, but the emphasis has clearly been placed on getting it right from the pilot's seat. A full range of view options lets you appreciate the efforts of the design team, and weapon launches and detonations are very well-handled. Lighting effects, such as flares, reflections and fading light add to the atmosphere, and the whole thing sounds fantastic as well - put on your headset, turn up the volume, and you're on your way!

In a nutshell, Jane's has cracked the balance between technical realism and gameplay. If the size of the manual has put you off one of their titles in the past, F/A-18 is the game you've been looking for.

Major Des McNicholas

PCPP

**FOR:** A treat for detail freaks and 'seat of the pantsers' in the one game. Great range of multiplayer options, solid training package and a first class mission builder.

**AGAINST:** Minor deficiencies in the manual and a limited operational area - plenty of room for mission discs!

**PLUS**

[www.dod.gov.au/RAAF/index.html](http://www.dod.gov.au/RAAF/index.html)

Forget the US Navy - Australia has some of the best Hornet pilots in the world! If you feel the need for speed then a visit to our own RAAF website will do the trick. History, images, all the latest news and some great links.



Royal Australian Air Force

91



# PRO PINBALL: Fantastic Journey

●Genre: Jules Verne Pinball Simulation ●Players: 1-4 ●Developer: Cunning Developments ●Publisher: Empire Interactive ●Distributor: Europress ●Price: \$TBA ●Rating: G ●Available: Now  
 ●Need: P90, 16MB RAM, 1MB video card, 50MB HD ●Want: P200, 64MB RAM, 8MB PCI video card, 400MB HD, 16-bit sound card ●URL: www.empire.co.uk

IT WAS UPON DELIVERY OF FANTASTIC JOURNEY THAT THE ENTIRE OFFICE STOPPED EVERYTHING, AND PLAYED...

What have the gamers of Australia waiting for? Deus Ex? Diablo II? Daikatana(hah!)? Well, it's a little known fact that of all the eagerly anticipated games, THIS one comes in close to the top (at least amongst select PCPP staff). "Huh?" I hear you ask, "Some pinball sim? Man, Powerplay's just lost it..." I can understand the astonishment, since there's not a lot of hype surrounding the Pro Pinball titles. All I can say is that these games are the real deal. This, good reader, is authentic pinball action in all its glory.

Fantastic Journey is the fourth title in the series and follow-up to last year's AWESOME Big Race USA (PCPP #33, 90%). BRUSA, as it is affectionately known, offered the pinball fan top-class visuals, infectious music, interesting modes of play and exceptionally realistic ball physics - the pinnacle of pinball gaming. The fact that you were only offered one table didn't bother me, since that table was so damn good. Inevitably, Fantastic Journey will be compared to BRUSA, a title that came out about 12 months ago.

## Slapping buttons

First off, there hasn't been any real additions or extensions to the game design. Everything runs just like it did in BRUSA, from the menus to the start-up to the game. This isn't necessarily a fault since BRUSA is still light years ahead of the competition, but it does make you wonder what will become of future instalments. So Fantastic Journey is cast in the same mould, but the gameplay is quite different.

The story of your Fantastic journey is set in a Jules Verne style Victorian



## Cwor... She's a beauty now, ain't she?

of the sea, fly to the highest mountains and others. All of this must be done with steam-powered contraptions. The pacing of the game is a little slower than BRUSA (since you're not driving a taxi!), but still makes for some thrilling gaming.

During an adventure, you have to shoot for certain targets, but you also have to keep your vehicle powered up! This means that you have to shoot for a spinner to keep the thing going. This compounding of things to do makes for some tricky moments. It also adds a



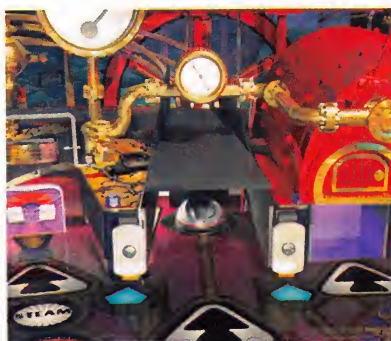
## It's all in the hips

Cunning are making an impressive name for themselves since Fantastic Journey is another top quality pinball sim. In the end, Fantastic Journey is a super game but not quite as satisfying as Big Race U.S.A., in my opinion. Maybe it's the music, maybe it's the story but it's not quite an equal to its predecessor. However, it still beats the pants off any other pinball title around now and is certainly worth the price of admission.

John Dewhurst

**"...MAKE A CHOICE...LEAVE THAT LOOSE BALL OR TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS..."**

era, where an evil mastermind must be thwarted by completing a number of fantastic journeys: dive to the bottom



little more strategy to the game, since you have to plan where you shoot and change your plans if you miss! A cool addition is the centre pin, since if the ball is heading right between the flippers, it can often be saved by bouncing off it. So you have to make a choice whether to leave that loose ball and trust your instincts, or go for it.

PCPP

**FOR:** Cunning have done it again: unmatched quality in pinball gaming!

**AGAINST:** Nothing new for fans of BRUSA, music gets annoying pretty quick.

**PLUS**

An earlier Pro Pinball title, "The Web" is included with your new copy of Fantastic Journey. It's...ummm... interesting... and free!



88



CHEF TAKES ON THE ROLE OF GAME SHOW HOST IN A WILD  
MULTIPLAYER MATCH FEATURING ALL YOUR FAVORITE SOUTH PARK  
CHARACTERS! COMPETE WITH YOUR FRIENDS IN DOZENS OF  
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**Acclaim**



**AVAILABLE DECEMBER 1999**

**WWW.ACCLAIM.NET**

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# DESCENT 3: Mercenary

●Genre: 3D Shooter ●Players: 1-16 ●Developer: Volition ●Publisher: Interplay Productions ●Distributor: Interplay Productions ●Price: \$49.95 ●Rating: M ●Available: Now  
 ●Need: Descent 3, 200Mhz, 32MB RAM, 300MB HD Space, 3D Video Card ●Want: 300Mhz, 64MB RAM, 2nd Gen Graphics Card (TNT2/V3) ●URL: <http://www.interplay.com/>

THIS EXPANSION PACK IS MORE OF A RE-RUN THAN A NEW EPISODE.

You may remember back in PCPP#38 where the bright and jovial Jere Lawrence reviewed the shelf copy of Descent 3 - he described the title as one with an "incredible 3D engine with totally engaging gameplay." Months later and over five years since the original Descent hit the shelves, Interplay release the official expansion pack, known only as Mercenary.

Whilst it didn't sweep the world with its mass appeal, the Descent series has witnessed a consistently cumulative following, with hardcore fans manoeuvring advanced angles since the days where kids were playing Doom on their 486s.

The Descent and Doom players were often subconsciously separated - with Descent players seemingly split and labelled as "advanced" gamers - probably only due to the fact that the Descent ship was much more difficult to control than a marine. Descent has total control over your 3D movement - that is, if you can get a handle on controlling it in the first place. While training simulators and guidebots help you come to grips with the rigours of your ship, if you lack a joystick, chances are you'll be left behind with the rest of the standard FPS bunch.

## Opposing Forces

Following a similar plot twist to the recent Half-Life mission pack, Mercenary puts you in charge of the "Black Pyros," a private army of hired pilots set out to do Dravis' dirty-work - you're a member of the army you originally fought. It's a game of role-reversal, and one would think that it could've been done beautifully because the authors of the original created it.

It was quite surprising to learn that Mercenary was by the same authors of Descent 3. The level of quality seems far less. Mercenary is like Descent 3, but without the shocks, surprises and tussles of the original. Whilst it's still enjoyable to play, it appears as though the developers' ideas were exhausted - there's nothing new to speak of, there's little in the way of new multiplayer maps, and you get the feeling that Mercenary doesn't use the full power of the Fusion engine. There's very little effects and a disappointingly diminutive amount of outdoor areas to speak of.

## New Trenches

Thankfully, making up for the seemingly static design, the developers have made the singleplayer levels much



Descent outdoors? It just doesn't work!

**"YOU COULD FIND MERCENARY TO BE EXTREMELY FRUSTRATING."**



more difficult than those of the original. Mercenary is a title that is as challenging to veteran pilots as Descent 3 was to a new player - the levels start out much more difficult and in one situation three different enemies were engaging in attack as soon as the level began. Without the experience gained in the first version, you could find Mercenary to be extremely frustrating.

The new robots are relatively impressive and manage to uphold the ominous impression generated in the original. They fit well into the game,

despite the fact that there's only seven new singleplayer levels to use as display stands. What's worse is that the levels don't seem to flow well with each other - they all seem as though different authors designed them, then placed them in an abnormal order. Although lacking in maps and game elements, the designer were kind enough to include D3Edit, the Descent3 level editor - which will almost ensure that the D3 community will be teeming with new underground - and aboveground worlds to explore.

Eli Brading

PCPP

**FOR:** Sports the same adrenalin-boosting action that has made the previous titles so damn addictive.

**AGAINST:** Doesn't add to the D3 experience. The lack of multiplayer maps. Hardly pushes the D3 engine to its limits.

**PLUS**

PLANET DESCENT  
<http://www.planetdescent.com/>  
 The base camp of all things Descent.



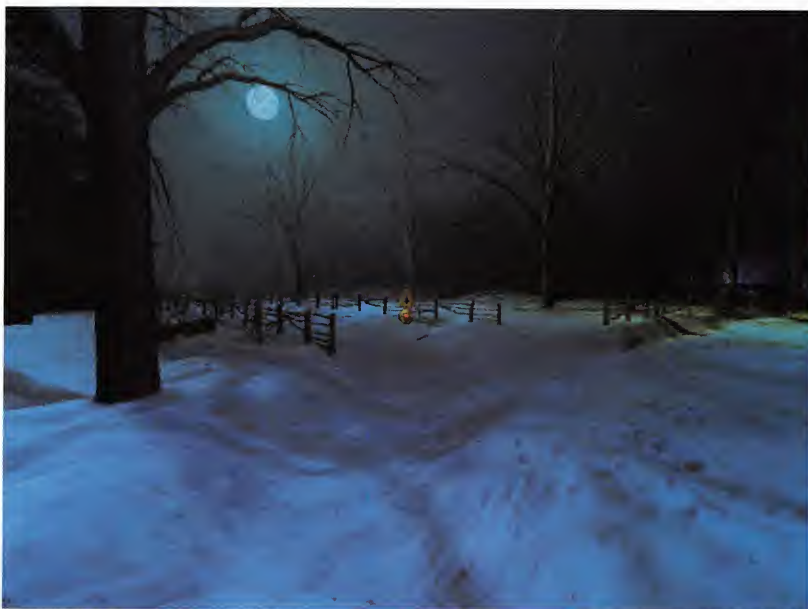
65



# DRACULA

●Genre: Point-and-click Problem Solver ●Players: 1 ●Developer: Canal Multimedia ●Publisher: Jack of all Games ●Distributor: Jack of all Games ●Price: \$TBA ●Rating: PG ●Available: Now  
 ●Need: P200, 32MB RAM ●Want: PII 300, 64MB RAM, 4MB video card ●URL: N/A

WELL, HERE'S SOME ATMOSPHERE, FOLKS. BUT UNFORTUNATELY, NOT MUCH ELSE.



XXXXXXXX cccc XXXX

The undead count and his depravations upon the city of London have long since passed away from Victorian literature to the realms of pop culture: movies, television, comics, radio shows, advertisements, even breakfast cereal and, of course, computer games. From the days of the early Atari and Activision platforms, Dracula has a long legacy of being digitised and pixelated.

## The pace is slow

The latest incarnation is from French designers Canal Multimedia. This time we follow the Count's slayer, Jonathan, whose beloved wife Mina has, eight years after the events at Carfax Abbey, broken of her marriage and travelled to far Transylvania. There, she has entered Castle Dracula alone. She has mere hours headstart on her husband who starts the game walking into an ancient inn, close on her heels,

with such a release. Yes, it certainly has a nostalgic sense of gameplay, but it's all been done before. Find the key, use it on the door. Make sure you have the garlic before entering this room style action. It's not exactly riveting, but if you liked it then, you may like it now.

Basically, Dracula plays slowly and carefully. Where it does surpass the older games is its extensive use of cut scenes. Every conversation is complete with a moving face, certain motions are accompanied by Sam Raimi-style camera motions and some actions move into strange life. They are of very high quality, which is welcome.

## And so is the talking

Lots and lots of talking is there as well. Jonathan interrogates pretty much everybody with equal fervour and length. Fans of vocal interaction will be delighted. To tell the truth, it seems to me to be overdone. One does not need



We know we wouldn't trust her cooking.



speaking game is the accent. Instead of thick Magyar accents, the local peasantry speak with broad Cockney by way of Hollywood accents. This bodes ill for meetings with the Count. ("Eh guv, me old china, how's ya father? I've come to suck the old rub a dub dub!")

The basic game is not bad at all but don't expect hours of riveting gameplay from it. This is pretty simplistic stuff and unlikely to hold your attention for too many hours. Certainly it's packed with puzzles and things to collect, and the interface is a very simple two-button click style, but where once the economic effect was preferred, now it simply seems to get old rather too quickly.

If you like old-style puzzle games, then this will be exactly what you are looking for. Its emphasis is on playing, not story or mood, so horror-hater, it's alright. But isn't the point of a Dracula game to scare you at least a little bit?

Christian Read

**"MAKE SURE YOU HAVE THE GARLIC BEFORE ENTERING THIS ROOM..."**

ready again to stand against horror. Or he should be, except the game is not exactly horrifying, or even that interesting.

It's a point and click adventure, very much in the vein of Myst or Ring. In other words, it feels like the kind of game you would have been very excited to be playing about five years ago, with all the good and bad points associated

a forty second cutscene to learn "I have not seen her." Especially when there is no escape key termination. An area where the fact that this is a non-English

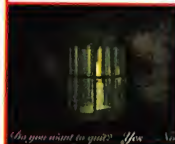
PCPP

**FOR:** Looks nice and the gentle pace will please some.

**AGAINST:** Not to put too fine a point on it - this is dull. Feels about five years old.

**PLUS**

Looking for a different slant on Dracula? Try the excellent Anno Dracula, Bloody Red Baron and Judgment of Tears trilogy by Kim Newman. Imagine a world where the Count beat the good guys and married Queen Victoria.



58



# SOUTH PARK RALLY

●Genre: Silly Racing ●Players: 1-8 ●Developer: Tantalus ●Publisher: Acclaim ●Distributor: Acclaim ●Price: \$TBA ●Rating: G ●Available: Now  
 ●Need: Pentium, 64MB, 3D Video Card ●Want: Nothing Special ●URL: www.acclaim.net

FINALLY, SOME COMPETITION FOR BOSS RALLY!



There's just something really wrong about seeing *South Park* characters in three dimensions.

As if the *South Park* quiz game and firstperson shooter weren't enough to prove that the franchise is wasted in videogame form, here comes *South Park Rally*. It has very little to do with rally driving and the graphics are every bit as poor as they are on television. And in 3D.

Let's get this straight: *South Park* is only good as a weekly distraction on telly, where the banality and profanity, and even the crappiness of the animation, still takes you by surprise. Stick those naughty comments into a game and they quickly lose their charm, repeated too many times and out of context.

**"...MAKES YOU FLATULATE WITH THE FORCE OF A ROCKET."**

You pick Arcade or Championship, then select a character from eight initially available (with a further 27 to be unlocked) and play. Finishing the first race in the Championship unlocks not only more tracks but more game modes too. There are normal races and events in which you must complete a set of objectives.

In the Valentine's Day race you have to find Cupid's bow and arrow, then shoot every one of your opponents to win. However, whether you're racing from checkpoint to checkpoint, delivering a trophy or trying to retain the antidote you've found, the terrible handling leaves little fun to be had.

## A Tad Too Typical

Unfortunately, the actual race is nothing special, presumably because the effort of programming so many weapons and powerups into the game was enough for the developers. The handling of the cars is unbelievably poor with only five keys on the keyboard employed for driving. Up is go, Down is reverse, Left, Right, Space for handbrakes and there's a shoot button as well.

This is *Mario Kart* for PC except that everything is disgusting, *South Park* style (*And crap - Ed*). Instead of missiles there are dogs which run off and hump opponents to a halt, or a hooker who gives other racers herpes. Instead of oil

slicks you can vomit all over the road with a regurgitative sound effect, to send those behind skidding out of control. The Speed Burst powerup comes in the form of Terrance and Philip dolls which makes you flatulate with the force of a rocket.

## Not To Be Taken Seriously

With the controls as sloppy as they are, winning a race depends entirely



upon the powerups you manage to collect. Weapons are common on the track but they don't help you as much as you'd like. The important thing is that you hit every one of the Terrance and Philip dolls to get more speed.

As for the other game modes, only luck can save you. This is a real shame as you only get five credits to play your way through the entire Championship. Further credits are to be found in remote parts of the courses, but the utter uselessness of their positioning only leads one to believe that they were placed simply to increase the number of pick ups available.

If you're a big fan of *South Park*, perhaps you will be pleased with the sheer number of characters, courses and comments in SPR. If you're a big fan of rally games, you may reach for your gun.

Hillous Lesslie

**PLUS**

www.sweet.com

One of the funniest *South Park* sites in the world (and run by Justin, from Orange, N.S.W.), sweet.com features originally produced renders of the SP gang. Especially love the new M:I 2 poster starring Mr Eric Cartman.



PCPP

**FOR:** Flat textures make a smooth race; there are some interesting game modes; the commentary is funny (the first few times you hear it).

**AGAINST:** Atrocious handling; too difficult; atrocious handling; unbalanced gameplay; atrocious handling and the handling's really bad.

41



A computer monitor is shown floating in the air, tilted at an angle. The background is a dark blue night sky with a grid of yellow and white light trails, suggesting a digital or data environment. The monitor's screen is dark, but there is a bright, glowing light source on the left side of the screen.

# Windows 2000

Handbook

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# PANDORA'S BOX

●Genre: Puzzle ●Players: 1 ●Developer: Microsoft ●Publisher: Microsoft ●Distributor: Microsoft ●Price: \$?? ●Rating: G ●Available: Now  
 ●Need: P100, 16MB RAM, Win 95/8, 4x CD ROM, 120 MB Hard Drive ●Want: P166, 32MB RAM ●URL: <http://www.microsoft.com/games/pandorasbox>

MORE ROLLICKING FUN FROM THE CREATOR OF TETRIS



Take a trip to Paris - visit the Louvre and colour some things in!

There's nothing like a famous name to give credibility to a new game. And while the name Alexey Pajitnov might not be immediately recognisable for most, if you preface his name with "creator of Tetris" like Microsoft have done on the box for their new puzzle game, you'll understand why this Russian game designer was a smart acquisition for Bill Gates and Co.

Alexey Pajitnov invented what's been called the perfect puzzle game back in 1985 while working for the Soviet government's Computer Center of the Academy of Sciences in Moscow.

Since moving to the "land of the free" in 1991 he's compiled puzzles for Microsoft's The Puzzle Collection and other puzzle games for Spectrum Holobyte, who developed the first commercially available Tetris game in the West in 1988.

His latest effort for Microsoft boasts 350 different puzzles, but really there are only ten puzzle types that use different pictures and objects as you progress through the game.

## Hit and Myth

What lifts Pandora's Box above other puzzle games is not only the quality of the puzzles themselves, which strike a

good balance between difficulty and accessibility, but the way that these individual puzzles have been woven into a larger story that gives you incentive to keep playing.

Pandora's Box has been opened and seven tricksters from ancient mythology have been unleashed on the world. It is the player's job to track them down and return them to the box.

To trap each trickster four relevant objects must first be found by completing puzzles in various great cities of the world. The puzzles are themed according to what country you're in, so for example, many of the picture puzzles in Paris use great paintings from the Louvre.

As each of the items is recovered, part of a story relating to the trickster is revealed. As you take each step closer to capturing the first trickster, Maui, you also learn the native Hawaiian myth of how the Hawaiian islands were created.

## Easy-peasy

This emphasis on ancient stories and the cultural imagery for each country moves Pandora's Box close to the much-maligned genre of educational games. It



definitely has a "family" aura about it, and this is reflected in the ease of the puzzles.

Microsoft's documentation states that most puzzles may be solved in 15 minutes or less, which is quite a generous estimate. Hardcore puzzle fans might at first be insulted by the lack of difficulty in some of the puzzles, particularly ones like Image Fill, which works like a colouring-in book. Other puzzles like Overlap and Focus Point are a bit more challenging, but for all of the puzzles it's possible to try to race the clock as Pandora's Box keeps track of the best times for each puzzle type.

All things considered, Pandora's Box is a pretty slick package as far as puzzle games go. It has enough extra features to attract those new to the genre, but its unashamed family appeal might turn off the more cynical gamers.

Elton Cane

**"IT DEFINITELY HAS A 'FAMILY' AURA ABOUT IT..."**



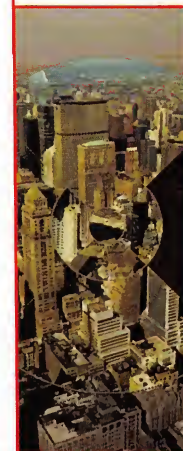
PCPP

**FOR:** Appealing artwork and some good visual puzzles.  
 Could be addictive for newcomers and puzzle fans alike.

**AGAINST:** Hardcore puzzle fans might find it a bit easy.  
 The music is annoying.

**PLUS**

<http://www.tetris.com>  
 Get the low down on the history of Tetris and discuss its many variations  
<http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Castle/4730/tlc.html>  
 A good online Tetris game



68



# AKUMA: DEMON SPAWN

●Genre: J-Adventure/RPG ●Players: 1-4 ●Developer: TriggerSoft ●Publisher: Globotech ●Distributor: Globotech ●Price: \$TBA ●Rating: MA 15+ ●Available: Now  
 ●Need: P200, 32MB RAM, 1MB video card ●Want: PII 300, 64MB RAM, 4MB video card ●URL: www.akuma.com

NINJA SCROLL MEETS DIABLO? IF ONLY...



And today's bout is against a horde of - can you guess? Yes, demons!

The Japanese phenomenon of manga and anime has always been a part of gaming. Consoles have sported the likes of Final Fantasy VII and Bust-a-Move and arcades are virtually nothing without their Japanese content: Street Fighter, King of Fighters, Tekken, etc. The sources of inspiration are almost boundless.

Akuma: Demon Spawn is an adventure title that draws much of its inspiration from anime such as Ninja Scroll - the story of an honourable ninja warrior caught up in a political battle that turns ugly. A stand-out action film in its own right. It's a pity I can't say the same for Akuma.

to people, fulfilling smaller quests but mostly just hacking and slashing at the demonfolk. You journey through the real world and into the "unreal" world where you'll face hordes of demons and tigers and bears (oh my!). Well, not the last two. By gaining experience, magic skills and bigger weapons you can face off with old Snatch.

The graphics are a little on the boring side, and there isn't the same kind of atmosphere to other similar games, but Akuma isn't dreadful. The interface is easy to use, giving you access to each individual character and their items or magic. You can customise the weapons or items that



Not the most threatening way to hold a sword.

slaughtered up close. But for any of them, the mere sight of any enemy makes them run to attack. There's a whole bunch of bad-ass demons over yonder who will obviously overpower your swordman - what's he going to do? Charge right in and get himself killed, of course! So control is an issue in Akuma.

...the tea party is over!

The gameplay is quite good, basically for the action/adventure elements. Narrative and character are almost irrelevant - it's just a killing affair. For these reasons, Akuma: Demon Spawn is not going to win any prizes. But for what it is, Akuma does a fair job - it is average gaming, but a little on the bland side.

John Dewhurst

## "A TRIO OF WARRIORS...IN A WORLD OVERRUN WITH DEMONS."

Akuma: Demon Spawn pits you against the underworld. Take a trio of warriors: a magician, a swordsman and an archer, put them in a world overrun with demons. The servants of Akuma (Satan) are loose - killing peasants, taking slaves, not giving a wave when you let them overtake you. So naturally you have to kill all of them, Satan included. No-one said a great game had to be original, but it doesn't hurt...

### Ninja...

In the game, you take control of these three warriors and escort them, Diablo-style, around different parts of the country, looking for items, talking

each is wearing or using and pass stuff between them. On this front the game works well. Even in the midst of battle, it's quite easy to control what goes on.

Control of your other characters who each have some variety of AI, is another matter. There is no way to give orders to your fellow travellers while you're using one particular warrior. This would be particularly useful in the case of the archer, who gets

**PLUS**

If you think Pokemon is the height of animation, you've got another thing coming... Take a look at this page, THE online anime magazine. [www.ex.org](http://www.ex.org)



**PCPP**

**FOR:** Playable, accent on the action & adventure, nice interface

**AGAINST:** Uninspiring story, boring characters, lacks atmosphere, just plain average!

**50**



# GORKY 17

●Genre: RPG/Horror/Western ●Players: 1 ●Developer: Topware Software ●Publisher: Monolith ●Distributor: Jack of all Games ●Price: \$TBA ●Rating: M15+ ●Available: Now  
 ●Need: 233, 32MB RAM, 300+ HDD Space, 4x CD ROM ●Want: PIII350, 64MB RAM, 2.1GB HDD Space, 3D Video Card, 8x Cd Rom ●URL: www.gorky17.com

NEVER JUDGE A GAME BY ITS TITLE...



At least his fire-breath doesn't affect his own shadow.

Whilst not quite on par with the levels of horror found in tales from the masters such as King or Lovecraft, Topware Interactive's latest creation eerily titled Gorky 17, is best described as a cross between an RPG, Night of the Living Dead and the tragic Chernobyl diaster. Set in the year 2008, Gorky 17 takes place in the recently decimated city of Gorky, hidden somewhere in the deep, dark icy wastes of northern Russia. You take on the role of Cole Sullivan, the leader of a crack group of NATO specialists tasked with the mission of infiltrating Gorky and securing the area from unwanted visitors, namely the global media who have taken an unhealthy interest in the recent goings on. However, when command sent your team in, they failed to mention the likelihood of encountering bizarre half-man half-mutant hybrids, which have some strange connection with Russia's recent destruction of this city.

**"...THE SO-CALLED RPG FLAVOUR IS BARELY TO BE FOUND."**

## Mutant

The game developers promised a hybrid game containing elements of many other genres all melded into one complete package, unfortunately, however well they may have accomplished this feat, Gorky 17 is still, in essence just an average product. Character interaction is very simplistic,

and the so-called RPG flavour is barely to be found as the story itself is extremely linear in the way it unfolds. There appears to be certain sections of the city which when traversed, immediately spawn an attack of some sort. Saving the game often (which is a necessary requirement in any RPG, even a quasi-RPG) is a clear indication of this.

The action slant is readily apparent. There are a variety of weapons depicted in the game, however most must be earned or found along the way. The critical factor apparent in order to complete Gorky 17 is conservation of ammunition, as there is no unlimited ammo option, and those miraculous "never run out" weapons we see Arnie toting on the big screen are inconveniently non-existent.

## Purty

Certainly the high point of the game, the visuals are a treat to behold, and the level of detail apparent in each and every

background scene is painfully evident. The characters themselves have an extremely high polygonal count and are



animated using a skeletal animation system. Gorky 17 plays from an isometric point of view, with the camera zooming into the action during combat and puzzle sequences. In addition to this, there are also occasional cut-scene video clips, which are extremely well rendered not to mention captivating. Gun shots and grenade blasts don't quite make the grade, and against the superior graphics displayed in the rest of the game, this underdone feature is sorely missed.

Gorky 17 is by no means a genre shattering title, but as a whole comes together well. For those hardcore RPGers out there, give G17 a wide berth, as it's likely to make you either sick or laugh. However this title is ideal for the casual gamer who doesn't mind a little horror.

Edward Fox

PCPP

**FOR:** Splendid visuals, original story. Audio is well implemented.

**AGAINST:** Very simplistic, perhaps too simplistic, will only catch the eye of the casual player.

**PLUS**

<http://www.disinfo.com>

The premiere web site for the unravelling of disinformation, a key factor story of Gorky 17.



65





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# SCORE LIST

THE PAST YEAR IN GAMING. THIS MONTH WE HIGHLIGHT OUR PICK OF THE BEST

GAME NAME SCORE ISSUE#



12 O'Clock High	68	#46
Abomination	81	#44
● Age of Empires 2	94	#42
Age of Wonders	84	#46
● Aliens vs. Predator	96	#37
● Alpha Centauri	96	#36
Alpha Centauri: Alien X-fire	83	#45
Amerzone	68	#42
Ancient Conquest	79	#35
ANNO 1602	71	#40
Army Men 2	79	#38
Asghan	43	#37
Australian Cricket Captain	86	#36
Baldur's Gate	87	#35
BG: Sword Coast	76	#41
Battle of Britain	62	#38



## WORMS ARMAGEDDON

**Developer:** Team 17  
**Publisher:** Hasbro  
**Distributor:** Hasbro

**What we said then:** "Whoo-hoo! Aficionados of previous Worms games should consider this a must purchase. Sheep now also appear in a super-heroic mould, donning a colourful cape and flying through the air with a scud-like payload, yet with the ease and dexterity of a dragonfly. So poetic!"

83% IN PCPP#36

Beavis and Butthead	68	#36
Blackstone Chronicles	75	#37
Boss Rally	5	#39
Braveheart	86	#42
Breakneck	86	#39
Burnout Drag Racing: PC	70	#35
● C&C Tiberian Sun	94	#41
Castrol Superbikes 2000	85	#42
Championship Manager 3	85	#38
● Civ 2: Multiplayer + classic	90	#28
● Civilization: Call To Power	96	#36
Civ: Test of Time	81	#41
Clans	48	#42
Close Combat 3	88	#35
Codename: Eagle	64	#46
Commandos: Call of Duty	83	#38
Constructor: Street Wars	74	#39
Corsairs	65	#40
● Cricket World Cup '99	93	#38
Cutthroats	67	#43
Dark Side of the Moon	47	#36
Dark Vengeance	30	#36
Darkstone	68	#42
Dawn of Aces	72	#36
Delta Force 2	78	#46
● Descent 3	95	#38
Dick Johnson V8 Challenge	45	#46
Disciples	81	#43
Discworld Noir	83	#39
Drakan	84	#43
Driver	71	#43
● Dungeon Keeper 2	90	#41
Eastern Front II	85	#39
Eidos Official F1	65	#39
● Episode 1 Racer	90	#39
● Everquest	90	#39
F22 Lightning 3	85	#40
FA Prem. League Stars	71	#42
FIFA 2000	88	#45
Fighter Squadron	85	#37
Fighting Steel	80	#41
Fleet Command	89	#39
Flight Unlimited III	89	#43
Fly!	85	#42
● Force 21	90	#42
Fox Sports NBA 2000	56	#44
● Freespace 2	95	#44
Gabriel Knight III	87	#44

## HOMEWORLD

● 95% IN PCPP#41

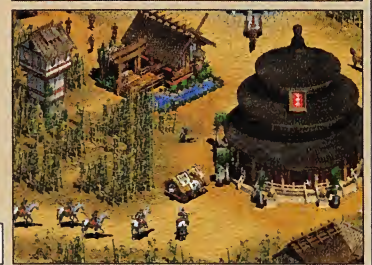
**Developer:** Relic  
**Publisher:** Sierra  
**Distributor:** Dataflow

**What we said then:** "Overall, Homeworld is an utterly amazing, whopping, behemoth of a game, yet your head doesn't spin with irrelevant information. Huge squadrons of fighters and bombers set up against each other in enormous, space-sized Mexican stand-offs... Homeworld is the new mould for all games set in the majestic vastness of space."

## AGE OF EMPIRES II: AGE OF KINGS

**Developer:** Ensemble  
**Publisher:** Microsoft  
**Distributor:** Microsoft

**What we said then:** "With an attention to fine detail and authenticity, Ensemble have really made the Age of Kings come to life. AoK is a great realtime strategy game. It's engrossing, it's enticing and above all it is a lot of fun. A natural... progression from the original Age of Empires."



● 94% IN PCPP#42

● GP 500	96	#43
Grand Theft Auto 2	84	#44
GTA London	75	#38
Grand Touring	60	#35
Gruntz	45	#37
Guardians of Darkness	30	#41
Gulf War: Desert Hammer	55	#45
● Half-Life: Opposing Force	90	#45
● Heavy Gear II	93	#40
● Heroes of Might and Magic III	94	#35
HOMM III: Armageddon's Blade	70	#45
Hidden and Dangerous	88	#41
H & D: Fight for Freedom	45	#46
● Homeworld	95	#41
I-War: Defiance	72	#44
Imperialism 2	72	#37
● Imperium Galactica 2	92	#46
Indiana Jones & Infernal Machine	69	#45
Jagged Alliance 2	89	#42

Jane's USAF	86	#44
Jimmy White's Cueball 2	67	#38
Kingpin	86	#41
● Lander	95	#37
Lands of Lore 3	60	#38
Links 2000	79	#44
Luftwaffe Command	68	#35
M25 Racer	25	#45
Madden NFL 2000	84	#44
● Machines	90	#38
Man of War II	15	#40
● Mechwarrior 3	91	#39
Microsoft Golf 99	80	#36
Midtown Madness	89	#40
● Mig Alley	92	#42
Might & Magic VII	70	#40
Mike Stewart's Bodyboarding	34	#40
MS Flight Sim 2000	84	#44
● Myth 2	91	#35

## MYTH II: SOULBLIGHTER

**Developer:** Bungie  
**Publisher:** Bungie  
**Distributor:** Jack of all Games  
**What we said then:** "Devilishness is afoot... Myth II will be the realtime strategy title of the moment. Soulblighter is one truly marvellous game, well worth playing. Onward, there's battle to be had... Leave my haystacks be!"



● 91% IN PCPP#35



## ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON

**Developer:** Chris Sawyer  
**Publisher:** Hasbro  
**Distributor:** Hasbro

**What we said then:** "Rollercoasters have everything you need in a pastime: adventure, excitement, romance, a little vomiting. With a combination of great gameplay and a sense of humour... it's a finely tuned, cleverly made joy to play. Play it, love it and dream of rollercoasters as far as the eye can see!"



● **93% IN PCPP#36**



## IMPERIUM GALACTICA 2

**Developer:** Digital Reality  
**Publisher:** GT Interactive  
**Distributor:** GT Interactive

**What we said then:** "Best described as a game combining selected elements of classic titles like Alpha Centauri, Homeworld and Sim City. Breathtakingly beautiful, terrifyingly addictive and downright enjoyable... IG2 distinguishes itself as one of the most impressive titles to grace the PC in recent times."

● **92% IN PCPP#46**

R'coaster Tyc: Added Attractions	81	#45	● System Shock 2	98	#42
Ruthless.com	82	#35	The Phantom Menace	76	#39
Saga: Rage of the Vikings	42	#40	The Wheel of Time	84	#45
Sega Rally 2	68	#41	● Thief Gold	96	#45
Seven Kingdoms 2	86	#44	Theme Park World	80	#45
Shadow Company	74	#44	Thrust, Twist & Turn	30	#39
Shadow Man	61	#41	Thunder Brigade	79	#35
Shane Warne Cricket	86	#37	● TOCA 2	91	#37
Silver	84	#36	Tomb Raider: Last Revelation	89	#43
● Sim City 3000	90	#35	Total Annihilation: Kingdoms	84	#40
Sin - Wages of Sin	73	#38	Traitor's Gate	78	#44
Skydive!	12	#42	UEFA 98/99	71	#38
Soul Reaver: Legacy Of Kain	81	#43	Ultima IX: Ascension	70	#45
Spec Ops 2	60	#46	Unreal: Return to Na Pali	72	#41
● Speedbusters	91	#36	● Unreal Tournament	94	#45
● Sports Car GT	90	#40	Uprising 2	58	#36
● Star Trek: BOTF	90	#39	Urban Chaos	85	#46
Star Trek: Hidden Evil	69	#46	Virtual Deep Sea Fishing	63	#38
Star Trek: Starfleet Command	87	#43	Warbirds 2	81	#37
Starcraft: Brood Wars	87	#35	Warzone 2100	88	#38
● Starsiege	90	#37	WCW Nitro	52	#35
Starsiege Tribes	88	#35	Worms Armageddon	83	#36
SU-27 Flanker 2.0	83	#44	● X-Wing Alliance	94	#37
● SWAT 3	90	#46			

NASCAR 3	89	#44	● Planescape: Torment	91	#46
Nascar Road Racing	28	#41	Prince of Persia 3D	65	#43
Nascar Truck	80	#38	Pro18 World Tour Golf	69	#38
Nations: Fighter Command	82	#44	Puma Street Soccer	75	#46
NBA Inside Drive 2000	68	#46	● Quake III: Arena	93	#45
● NBA Live 2000	90	#45	Rainbow Six: Eagle Watch	86	#36
Need for Speed: High Stakes	89	#41	● Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear	92	#44
Nerf Arena	70	#46	Rally Championship 2000	88	#45
NHL Championship 2000	78	#46	Rayman 2	89	#45
Nocturne	79	#46	Re-Volt	82	#41
North vs. South	67	#37	Redguard	78	#35
● Omikron: The Nomad Soul	93	#44	Redline	83	#37
Operation Art of War 2	84	#42	● Requiem - Avenging Angel	90	#38
Outcast	59	#40	Resident Evil 2	88	#37
Panzer Elite	85	#46	Revenant	82	#45
Pharaoh	88	#45	● Rollcage	90	#38
Phoenix	64	#46	● Rollercoaster Tycoon	93	#36

## WIN THE BEST OF STRATEGY!

**What we say now:** To win your choice of one of the best strategy games of all time, simply send an envelope to 'Best of Strategy' at PCPP, level 6, 418A Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010. List your choice, and explain why it is the best strategy game of all time. Entries close March 25th.

## JAGGED ALLIANCE 2

**Developer:** Sirtech  
**Publisher:** Talonsoft  
**Distributor:** Jack of all Games

**What we said then:** "Jagged Alliance's addictive and ingenious gameplay paved the way for best-selling titles like Fallout. Jagged Alliance 2 can be summed up in one word: Detail. The loud thud of a high velocity bullet smacking into a rock beside a mercenary's head will make even the most composed player wince."

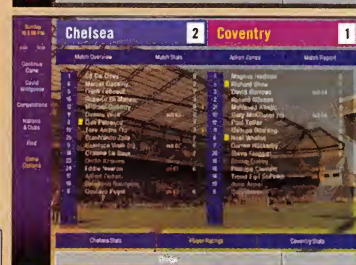


**89% IN PCPP#42**

## CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER

**Developer:** Sports Interactive  
**Publisher:** Eidos  
**Distributor:** Ozisoft

**What we said then:** "Civilization with footballs... Championship Manager 3 is addictive, absorbing gameplay of the highest calibre. Sure, it's never going to win awards for beauty, yet it thrashes all and sundry in terms of user-friendliness."

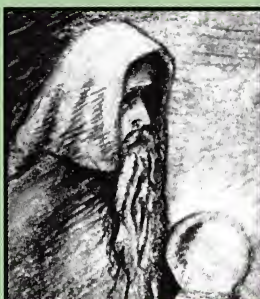


**85% IN PCPP#38**



# Gameplay

**HEADLINES:** Theme Park World Playguide • GP500 Playguide • Thief: The Dark Project Tips • SWAT 3 Cheats • Quake 3 Arena Cheats • Delta Force 2 Cheats • Nocturne Cheats



The Oracle is a Wisdom Dispensing Service. He cannot abide cheaters. Write to him at:  
**Oracle**  
PC PowerPlay  
Level 6 418a Elizabeth St.  
Surry Hills, NSW 2010  
oracle@pcpowerplay.next.com

## CODE

### Delta Force 2

Hit the Tilde (~) key to bring up the console, then type in the following codes:  
**THETROOPER** - God mode  
**SUNANDSTEEL** - reload ammo  
**DIEWITHYOURBOOTSO**  
**N** - unlimited ammo  
**STILLIFE** - invisibility  
**REVELATIONS** - eight artillery shots

### Nocturne

The following codes are for the first patched version of Nocturne. Press F10 to activate the console, then type in the code to activate the corresponding cheat.  
**IAMACHEATINGBASTARD** - God mode  
**GIMMECRAP** - all weapons and ammo (plus God mode)  
**EBOLA** - kill surrounding creatures  
**T2000** - turns you into the Terminator 2000  
**LAYITONME** - ammo  
**AMONRA** - sun gun

# THE ORACLE

Far-reaching, boundless, infinite, eternal, etc. He's still the usual old pretentious bollocks.

**R**ight. Just a friendly reminder to you people. Firstly, when writing or emailing in, it is very important that you include the name of the game, because, yes, some of you forget this important detail. Write the name of the level, if it is appropriate. I mean the real name of the level, not just what you want think it is called. Include which CD it is on as well, if necessary. Make sure you spell character and item names correctly. Then state the nature of the problem. The Oracle can divine any answer, but those written using these simple guidelines will receive priority answers.

### Soul Reaver: Legacy of Kain

**Q>** Hi, I just got your last mag and installed the Soul Reaver demo. It's a cool game and all, but there is one thing that is annoying. I CAN'T LITE THE DAMN TORCH! How do you get the torch to appear up near the fire? You can only get there in Spectral mode and you can't carry stuff in Spectral mode so what have I done wrong? Please share your wisdom.

**the\_nomad\_soul**

**A>** My wisdom is easily shared. To light the torch, very simply

walk up to any fire, of which you should find at least one in the demo and use the action button. If this is not working, make sure that you are close enough that the flames are catching. Incidentally, the word is "light"... kindly learn to spell before bothering me again.

### Rogue Squadron

**Q>** Could you tell me what you have to do to unlock the secret missions in Rogue Squadron?

**P.M.C.M. Bradbury**

**A>** Simply win gold for every mission. You will receive a secret mission. If you get gold in that, then the next secret mission will be unlocked. Win gold again, and that too is unlocked. There are three in all. Beggars Canyon, the Death Star Run and the assault on Hoth. Of course, you have to be very good to get golds for all of them. Get practising.

### Half-Life

**Q>** I'm having trouble with Half-Life, I'm up to the last boss (the big baby looking thing) and I can't seem to kill him. I would appreciate any assistance with this problem.

**Daniel Alden, NZ**

**A>** Firstly bounce up to the top platform. There is a bouncer on the floor that will get you up there. Shoot the Nialanth, or big baby looking thing as you so charmingly refer to him, until the top of his head opens up. It opens only a very small way so you really have to pump fire power into him and pay attention. Then bounce up high until you can get a good shot into his brainpan. Two to three detpacks should be sufficient firepower. Or you can jump directly onto its head and mess it up with the crowbar. Showy, but certainly a rewarding effort.

### Baldur's Gate

**Q>** I've just finished Baldur's Gate and was wondering if you could tell me how to get some secret players for my

party, like Elminster, Drizzt, Volo, Sarevok or even Gorion. I saw in a screenshot in your walkthrough that you had Drizzt, so could you please help me? Thanks a lot.

**Spencer, NZ**

**A>** Well, when you stop to consider that one of those characters dying is the cheap motivation for the game, one of them is your archenemy, and the others are extremely important NPCs, you may realise that you have been misinformed concerning these worthies joining you. This is not to mention that Elminster is in the vicinity of a 30th level mage. Might upset game balance just a tad. What you saw was Drizzt joining your party for a short quest. He does not hang around when you are finished with him. Before you get discouraged, bear in mind





there are 22 characters that will join your party. Unless you have a truly noxious personality, someone will join you.

## System Shock 2

**Q>** I've bought System Shock 2 recently and am stuck at one point. I am on deck 4 and have all of the sim unit override cards. I have used two of them on Sim units but I can't find the last one. I think the Sim units I have located are Sim 2 and Sim 3.

### Blood Angel

**A>** From the level beginning, go down the long corridor and head into the central room on that deck. The sim-units are located through the bulkheads in there, two are through bulkhead with the bend in it, and one is waiting for you in the last bulkhead. Make sure you search the deck entirely, because you may have to do some reprogramming to make the sim-cards work for you.

## Discworld Noir

**Q>** Oh wise and powerful Oracle. You are the greatest demigod ever to walk the earth. Please grant me your wisdom for Discworld Noir. I am at the beginning of Act 3 and have just turned into a werewolf. I, not having your magic powers, cannot figure out what to do and where to go next. Please grant me your aid.

### Renberstar

**A>** Your obsequious cringing fills me with some nausea, but appeals to my hard-earned ego. So I shall tell you to turn into a wolf and follow the magenta trail to outside the casino. Pick up the moss next to the chalk outline, and turn into a wolf again. Use the same trail to follow it further, ending up in the graveyard behind the temple of Small Gods. Look at the stained glass window and the silhouette. Go back to your office to greet Nobby, and take the crowbar he leaves



behind. He'll also tell you about some of the other murders that went on. You need to find out more details about each of these three additional murders. From there you should be able to pick up the investigation.

## Age of Empires II

**Q>** To High and mighty Oracle, my name is Andre Naly and I love Age of Empires. I recently bought AOE2 and I don't know any cheats for it. I was wondering if you could send me some.

### Andre Naly

**A>** No, cheating is odious. Gaming is about gaming, not cheating. And why would you cheat in AOE. Don't bother me again.

## C&C: Tiberian Sun

**Q>** CAN I PLEASE HAVE CHEATS FOR TIBERIAN SUN PLEASE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

### Alan J

**A>** Again. No. Let this be a lesson to all those who would plague me with this again. I shall never provide cheats with their grubby little fixes. They are available elsewhere in the magazine you are currently perusing.

## Descent: Freespace

**Q>** Hi, I'm writing to your most excellent magazine because I have trouble with the great game Freespace. I can't get past the mission called "Clash of the Titans" I have played the mission 5 times and can't beat it.

Please help PC Powerplay!

### Matthew

**A>** Intercept all bombers and fighters, but you should especially focus on the bombers and the missiles they fire. Make sure you are able to intercept them in time. Fighters tend to do some damage to capital ships, but they don't carry Cyclops missiles. When you are intercepting the bombs, make sure you don't destroy them from close range. An exploding Cyclops at close range can seriously damage your shields. Trebuchets are a good choice for this mission, mainly because of

their range and power. But don't load them in both your missile banks. You have to make sure that you have enough missiles (you can't carry 400 trebuchets) to last this mission and the next one (you don't get time to reload or choose another ship).

## Freespace 2

**Q>** It involves the mission called 'Proving Grounds' (SM2-03). In the Secondary Objective list the Shivan corvette is supposed to be destroyed, but I have been unable to do so. My brother has managed to disable the corvette, but its hull integrity refused to go under 10%. Is this a bug in the game or is this supposed to happen?

### Matthew Wong

**A>** The corvette jumps in later on in the mission, but you have to go for it first. It's a nasty thing indeed, so



# CODE

**DRIVEBY** - tommy gun  
**TORCHMYASS** - flamethrower  
**TNTRULES** - dynamite  
**WOODENSTAKEGUN** - wooden-stake crossbow  
**SHOTGUNSHELL** - shotgun and 500 shells  
**TORCHTIP** - flaming arrows  
**DUMBOGUN** - elephant gun  
**BARONSATURDAY** - summons Baron  
**REALLYCOLD** - freezes enemies  
**KEYSUPER** - skeleton key  
**OLDHAT** - Stranger wears new hat  
**BANDAID** - restores full health  
**SILVER** - 500 silver bullets  
**AQUA** - 500 aqua bullets  
**MERCURY** - 500 mercury bullets  
**YOUFARTED** - Stranger wears gas mask  
**PINKBUNNY** - recharges battery

## Quake III: Arena

To unlock all levels at Skill 1:  
 Bring down the console and type: /IAMACHEATER.  
 Unlock all levels at Skill 100:  
 Bring down console and type: /IAMAMONKEY.  
 In order to use the following cheats in multiplayer mode, the server must have cheat mode enabled. To do this, bring down the console and type: /devmap +map [name]  
 God mode: Bring down console and type: /GOD.  
 All weapons: Bring down console and type: /GIVE ALL.  
 More items using /GIVE: Type /GIVE followed by the following codes to receive the corresponding items: **HEALTH, ARMOR, AMMO, PERSONAL TELEPORTER, QUAD DAMAGE.**

## Tomb Raider: TLR

Level skip cheat:  
 Go to the Inventory screen and look at the compass. For this trick to work, the red part of the needle needs to be facing north (you can tell because the



## CODE

needle becomes semitransparent when it is pointing exactly north). Next, go to the Load Game icon and press and hold **H-E-L-P** simultaneously for a second or two, then exit out of the Inventory menu. Unlimited ammo/gear: Make sure Lara is facing exactly north. The compass needle should be semitransparent. Go to the Inventory screen (push Esc) and go to Small Medi-Pack. Press and hold **G-U-N-S** for a moment, then release. All weapons: Make sure Lara is facing exactly north. Go to the Inventory screen and go to Large Medi-Pack. Press and hold **W-E-A-P-O-N-S** for a moment, then release.

### SWAT 3

While playing, press Shift and the Tilde key (~) simultaneously to activate the console, then type in the following codes to activate the corresponding cheats:

**AMLEET** instant win  
**JOHNWOO** slows down game  
**SWATLORD** God mode  
**BIGGERPOCKETS** unlimited ammo  
**CASUAL** team loses pants and shirts  
**DOUBLESLOT** weapon fires faster  
**NC17** more blood when someone is injured  
**NOSHADES** night missions play as if during the day  
**HOTSTUFF** suspects are harder to kill  
**JUSTIN** suspects never surrender  
**RABIES** rats turn into killers when shot

### The Wheel of Time

Hit the Tab key to open the console, then type in the following codes and press Enter to activate the cheats.

**GOD** God mode  
**ALLAMMO** all guns and ammo  
**FLY** Fly mode  
**WALK** Walk mode



target the beam turrets, so it doesn't inflict much damage to the Aquitaine. Then go for whichever weapon system you want. I would recommend the missile launchers first, but don't ignore chances to take out secondary lasers here and there as the opportunity arises. Keep close the corvette, and then the Aquitaine will open fire on it for you. It needs to use your sensors to get a lock on the Tiamat. Pretty simple stuff, really. Incidentally, it's not a secondary objective per se, so don't worry so much about it. Just keep going with the game.

### Planescape: Torment

**Q>** I can't get Merriman in the Festhall to give me the keys to the prostitute robot's heart in Planescape: Torment. Can you help me please?

James

**A>** Of course I can help you. You need to go into the apartments in the Festhall, travel to the western rooms and meet a woman called Unfulfilled Desires. Tell her what you want. She'll take something from you, but don't worry, it's not in any way lethal. From there go down to the café towards the bottom of the Ward and talk to the drunken mage. Tell him about the woman and he will give you a magic cup. Take that, walk a little way to the east and then go into the art gallery. Find a display called "The Dark Birds of Oceanthus" or something similar. You will be given an option to put the water in the cup. From there go back to Merriman who will give you the keys. Oh, and save yourself some time and buy the Deva's Tears and the Fiends Tongue on your way to see the grumpy old man. You'll thank me for it.



### House of the Dead

**Q>** I cannot defeat the last boss on House of the Dead 2. Kindly share your wisdom with a mortal such as myself and my friend.

BJB

**A>** During his Spear Charge Attack, try to slam Emperor as many times as you can before he transforms the orbs into a spear. When he loses enough energy, then you will have to deal with his intense Orb Metamorphosis Attacks. He will transform the orbs into Tower, Strength, Hierophant, or Judgment

by channelling some of his energy into the orbs to give the orbs the will to morph into a past boss. Timing is everything while repelling the orbs and every time you do, you will hurt Emperor. Keep doing it long enough until he becomes a droplet of moving Plasma Energy. Immediately after he starts his Plasma Ball Attack, slam Emperor as many times in the Red Orb as much as you can. Be careful because the Orbs spin around like an Orbit and will block an entire shot at the Red Orb. If you hit the Red Orb enough times, then you won't sustain a hit. Emperor will go back and forth and charge at you with his Plasma Ball Attack until he's no more. The best way to kill Emperor from the start of his Plasma Ball Attack is to slam his weak point continuously. Don't let up for a second. When you've landed enough hits to prevent the boss man from attacking you, slam his red orb again. Just keep moving and shooting. And aim well.

## READER'S TIP

Of course, some of you out there can gain my favour by providing information for your gaming siblings. Easter eggs, so named because they are little presents from game designers, often pop up. If you know an interesting egg or something of it's nature, send it to me. While I of course know all, I offer you the chance to show off your prowess to others. And ask for no token in return for the Oracle does not trade or bandy favours.

### Thief: The Dark Project

Enter the training mission and complete all the lessons up to the sparing partner. As soon as you have had enough, run over to the desk and pick up the key. Quickly follow the swordsman through the corridor and follow it until you reach a door. Unlock the door with the key and you will find yourself in an indoor basketball court! It contains a basketball you can pick up and throw through the hoops and a bedroll full of quotes from the Looking Glass team! Be sure to pick up the basketball first because you cannot drop the bedroll. Have fun.

Zephyr "Shaft" Cranney



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# WEB resources

## FIFA 2000

It's been five years since the world was first dazzled by EA Sports efforts at recreating the (according to Les Murray) World Game, designed for the armchair player. In this short period, the FIFA series has now achieved legendary status and with each new release come new levels of excellence and realism. The latest in this series, FIFA 2000, has again taken virtual soccer one step closer to perfection, and with a gigantic global following, EA Sports are set to continue this trend well into the new millennium. Listed below are some essential hints, tips, strategies and resources that every budding FIFA-ist will need to get started on the road to football glory.

### FORMATION

The ideal formation for any team varies remarkably according to an individual's playing style. If simply running and shooting are your thing, then you should opt for a more attacking stance, with perhaps three or even four attackers backed up by at least three midfielders. On the other hand, should you prefer a more conservative approach, boost the number of midfielders in order to control the middle of the pitch - the area where consistent possession is critical for progressive built-up attacks on goal. Lastly, the defensive stance should only be resorted to if your team leads by one goal in the last few minutes of a match.

### PLAYERS

Slotting players into their "appropriate" position is now more important than ever before. The AI in FIFA 2000 is amazingly sophisticated and will absolutely shred any team with mismatched player positioning. Take that extra bit of time to checkout your players' strengths and weaknesses, and position them accordingly, as poorly managed player positioning can be disastrous no matter how skilled the man (or gal) with the joy pad is.

### STRATEGY

Developing a good strategy and having the ability to evolve it according to your opposition is the key to successful FIFA gaming. Whether it's just a friendly match-up or the World Cup final, it's imperative that you study the other teams



Players will be able to maintain and increase the

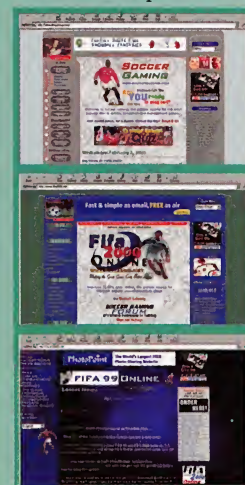
formation and adjust your own appropriately. This counts for opposition tactics as well. Pay attention to which routes the AI generally take whilst advancing the ball. Should any patterns of attack (or defence) start to appear, quick counter by either changing your formation or adjusting your playing stance and style. By constantly keeping on top of your opponents' tactical situation, you'll quickly find your win ratio rising exponentially.

### SET PIECES

New to the FIFA series in FIFA 2000 is the ability to manipulate (to a certain extent) your attack or defence set-piece strategy. This is done in two ways, in either attack or defence. In attacking set-pieces, quickly scan the pitch and pay attention to the positioning of the opponents' defenders. If you notice any players marked by only one man or in an open area, hit the set-piece button and that player will make a burst of speed in order to loose his marker. Once this is accomplished, quickly hit the pass button, and viola, you have a player in possession without a marker. Simply reverse this tactic for defensive situations, by simply tightening up the defenders who are not marking efficiently.

### WEB RESOURCES

As with any title that demands a huge following, the number of dedicated websites is staggering. With numbers in the hundreds, listed below are the three premiere sites promoting the FIFA series of games. These FIFA resources continue to raise their fan numbers through extensive in-depth discussion of the game.



[www.fifagaming.com](http://www.fifagaming.com)  
- FIFA Gaming

[www.fifazoo.net](http://www.fifazoo.net)  
- FIFA 2000 Online

[www.fifag9.net](http://www.fifag9.net)  
- FIFA 99 Online



# Map of the Month

## Quake III

**Map Type:** Space Parallel

**Name:** The Gateway

**Players:** 6-8

**Designed For:** 4-6 FFA/ 1-1 TOURNEY

**Website:** [www.quake3world.com/quake3](http://www.quake3world.com/quake3)

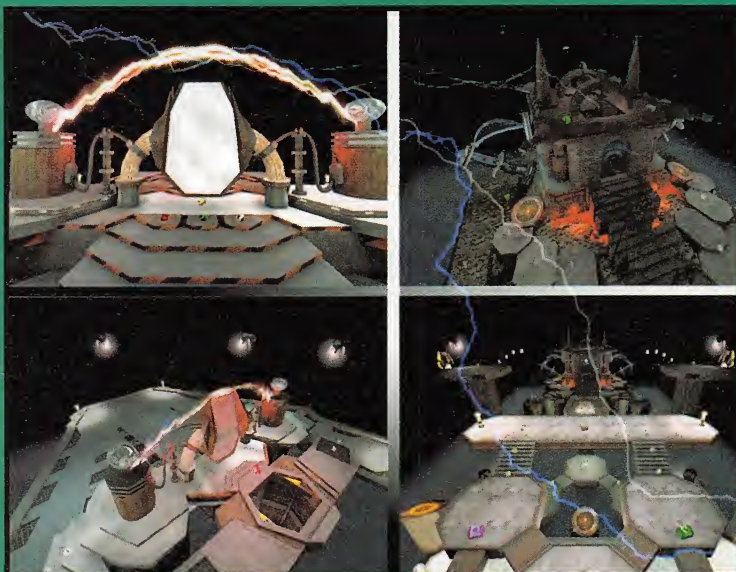
"I hope to provide in every map something that hasn't been seen before in the FPS community, while maintaining great gameplay. This is a difficult challenge, there are many great level designers, and I hope to be considered one of them someday soon!"

With Gateway, the entity known as Vexar looks to have already achieved his desired status.

The map is a battle between the future and the past in a surreal void setting. This space map

contains every weapon the game has to offer, as well as the Quad Damage/Regeneration/Invisibility powerups and the Bodysuit.

The gateway is a floating platform that isn't visible from the main area, and must be teleported to. Once there, players can obtain the red armour and a weapon of their choice between the railgun, lightning gun and rocket launcher. It's an interesting idea that works well for the map, with an extra



element of split-second decision making required that could mean the difference back in the void.

Within the gateway exists a time locked capsule, which holds the BFG and the Quad/Regeneration/Invisibility. A Global announcement lets players know when the Powerups are available to be recovered.

The map is fast and frantic for 6-8

players, but, inconceivably, the map also works extremely well in a one-on-one situation. It's something fresh and exciting - and despite the level of detail, it runs surprisingly smooth on even the lowest of systems. If you don't have it on your system already, check it out and you'll be pleasantly surprised by one of the most revolutionary maps created thus far.

# Mod of the Month

## Unreal Tournament

**Mod Type:** Team

**Name:** - Jailbreak

**Website:** [www.planetquake.com/jailbreak/](http://www.planetquake.com/jailbreak/)

The jailbreak mod for Quake2 was one that had instant appeal, especially in the States where multiple servers across the nation supported the community mod. The Unreal Tournament version follows exactly the same premise as the original release, the team following the ideal of "if it isn't broke, don't fix it."

Jailbreak is as the name suggests - a game where two teams, red and blue, attempt to keep

its members free from jail. If you kill a player on the opposite team, they will go into your jail. Killing and capturing all players on the opposite team will result in a win for your team. The action comes from the likelihood of a jailbreak. Buried deep within the opposition's base are triggers that will open the jail doors for your fellow teammates.

The game is extremely team orientated - with the players who enter as individuals likely to be the first ones to end up in the slammer. If you've never played Jailbreak before, it's an extremely simple title to get into, and previous players will be instantly familiar.



At the time of writing, there was no official website to be found, but you can check out the Quake2 variant the above URL. The mod is currently in the beta phase.

# Skin of the Month

## Quake III

**Name:** Goliath

**Model:** Klesk (id)

**Website:**

[www.planetquake.com/skinsmith](http://www.planetquake.com/skinsmith)

Perhaps one of the easiest areas of game editing, player skin modification was made popular when the cult-classic Quake was released by id. Skins ranged from metallic androids to

fleshy-biker chicks - and the diversity in design is already unbridled amongst the cohorts of Q3A.

Painted for the Klesk model, the Goliath skin by SuperTech is as eerie as it is striking. With emanating eyes that pulsate a fiery red, this green-skinned being is one that will strike fear into the hearts of enemy Arena entities.







## THEME PARK WORLD Playguide

BY JOHN DEWHURST

John builds theme parks in his sleep, and can name every rollercoaster ever constructed worldwide. Come share in his funpark wisdom.

So you think you know how to build a theme park? It's not an easy proposition: lots of management details, staffing details, decisions, decisions! It's also a little intuitive: where should all the rides be positioned in your park? How do I turn off the advisor? (In the options screen...) Where do I put the toilets? If you're a bit stumped with Theme Park World, or just want to improve your park development skills, you've

taken the first step. I'm no little black dot with a Scottish accent but don't let that put you off.

The essence of a good theme park is enjoyment. If you can offer this, whether it be with sugary drinks, salty food, water rides, sideshows or rollercoasters, you'll have a theme park full of people - and a wallet so fat, you won't be able to stand up. But people will not spend their money if they have to put up with such things as litter, bad paths, broken down rides or stink bombs.

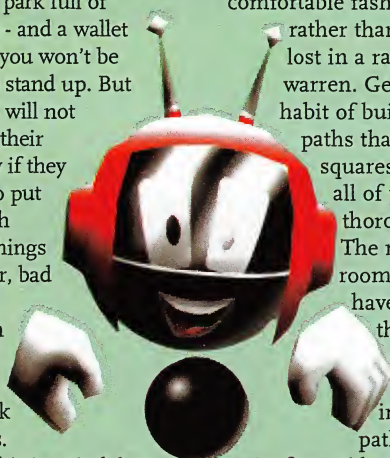
With this in mind, let's look at the finer points of park management.

### Paths

Build your park for the people, NOT the rides. This means that the paths should be well-spaced and logically arranged. Good paths first - big rides second! This means that your guests will be able to get around in a comfortable fashion

rather than getting lost in a rabbit's warren. Get into the habit of building paths that are two squares wide for all of your thoroughfares. The more room people have to move the better. Less

important paths, like exits from rides or a path to your staff room can be smaller. Happy paths means happy visitors.



### CALLING ALL SCIENTISTS! CALLING ALL SCIENTISTS!

It's a great idea to have lots of scientists in your park to do your research but (funnily enough) walking around the park doesn't actually help their research! Set their patrol areas to around the staff room, so they can take a quick kip easily and then be back on the job. All your other employees need to be moving around though...





"Must resist... the temptation... to eat... the children!"

I generally build paths into large grids, with squares just big enough for a ride or two with a number of smaller attractions surrounding. When the paths are

straight, it's easier to see what's going on and it's easier for everyone (staff and visitors) to get where they are going.

### Make your Staff more effective TODAY!

It's tempting to just hire a couple of each staff member and then get on with building your park. However everything will run much better if you use patrol areas. So allocate a patrol area for all of your cleaners, security guards, mechanics and entertainers (if only to shut the little black dot up!). That way you'll hire enough staff members for your park and there won't be too many of them wandering around aimlessly.

The best way to set up your staff is to hire your men when you build a



Even the spreadsheets of TPW reek cuteness.

### IT'S ALL ABOUT TERRITORY

Setting patrol areas is great but your employees need a rest now and again. Your best bet in making your park's staff work effectively, is to overlap their patrol areas, particularly for cleaners who need to cover every single inch of the park. That way, when one is off on a break, another is around to do his work for him.



new path. Right after you've laid a new boulevard, you hire the staff you need for it and set their areas. This way staffing is (and should be) an ongoing consideration.

order to satisfy your public. You need to keep an eye on what people are thinking. If a lot of people are hungry or thirsty

### Shops & Sideshows - Your Income!

In Theme Park World, your guests don't pay for rides, so your main source of income (aside of the entry fee - see below) is in your shops and sideshows. Generally speaking, you can't have too many of these in your park. Any chance to swindle a hapless passer-by for their hard-earned cash shouldn't be passed up. Keep an eye on your stalls and if one's not doing well, replace it with another one or demolish it all together.

Throughout your park, there needs to be a careful balance of attractions, in

### BALANCE IS THE KEY

It's a good idea to have a concept of where attractions are likely to go before you start putting all of them in. You don't want to have one part of your park filled with all of the exciting attractions, only to have the other end a ghost town. Try to spread out your rides as much as possible to avoid congestion and spread your guests around.





# GAMEPLAY

## MMMMMM... FRENCH FRIES....

It's a good idea to put a couple of food stalls at the entrance of your park because your guests (if they enter) will pass them at least twice. It's also a great way to stop those hungry/thirsty guests from going home for a bite to eat.

somewhere - build a food stand! You should stagger the entertainment and the food attractions so that there's never too far to walk before something a guest wants comes along. Be aware of what people are doing/thinking and you should be able to supply for them whatever they need.

At all times, be ruthless in flogging your product. You need to jack up the prices until no-one will buy from you - then drop it back a notch or two. Think about the last time you were at a fun park. \$4 for an ice cream? Highway robbery! - but you still bought it. The difference between \$4 and \$6 isn't that much. You just have to find what people are willing to pay.

On the other hand, I wouldn't use this same tactic for the entrance fee. Having the price so high that people might be discouraged from entering isn't good business. Once they're inside they will probably play at least one

sideshow or buy one drink, so you'll get that money somehow. If they don't come in at all though, what have you gained? You should probably wait for prompting on when to raise your entrance price, since even in the most dire circumstances, raising these prices generally won't get you out of trouble.

On profits generally, if you're losing money (red arrow) then you really shouldn't be spending too much. If you're park is well designed you shouldn't have too many problems, but every so often there is a lull in profits and that's when you tighten your belt! Loans are an absolute last resort unless you know how to turn a quick







Ralph regretting the bseast that he wasn't ticklish...



profit. Debt, as they say, is a mug's game.

### Laying out your Park

Basically you want to put the really good things far away and all the impulse attractions along the way - like in a supermarket. All the really great rides are bigger and easy to see anyway, so it's worth putting your big rollercoasters and such, as far back as possible. On the way to that great water ride or rollercoaster, put in sideshows and food stalls, so that people moving to and from the rollercoaster have something to catch

their eye on.

Make the big attractions the extremities of your park. Putting some sideshows of little interest behind a great ride will just mean that no-one will visit them. In this way, you can keep people moving around your stalls and shops while they head to their favourite attraction.

It's a good idea to put in bins and toilets all over your park, for obvious reasons. Place both of these features near to your shops (bins particularly) and rides

## MONEY CHALLENGES

It's interesting that the challenges offered to you almost always concern making profits or selling particular goods. If you can get your shops and stalls running effectively right from the start, any challenges that are offered to you will be a piece of cake! You probably won't need the money, since your shops will be doing so well but that extra couple of thousand sure can come in handy...



### Keep those staff costs low!

(toilets particularly). This will help to lighten the load of your cleaners.

### Keys and Tickets

An important part of the game is the winning of golden tickets that accumulate to get golden keys that allow you access to the other parks. The winning of tickets coincides with a number of things: a target



number of people in your park, a target level of happiness in the park, researching and building all the rides in a park, making a certain amount of profit in a year, etc.

The better a park runs the easier it is to win the golden tickets. If you're having trouble getting the tickets, use some of the tactics mentioned earlier and be persistent! However annoying the little Scottish fellow is, he does have some good advice for your park, so take his advice as well. With a little planning & good management, sooner or later, you'll be making some awesome theme parks!



## PESKY WORKERS

If you have any trouble with workers who won't do their job - cleaners who won't clean being the most obvious culprits - just fire them. Training is all well and good, but lazy workers don't change in my experience. Show him the door and get someone better!





## GP500 Playguide

BY EDWARD FOX

The essential guide to perfecting your racing technique.

GP500 fulfilled many expectations when it assumed the number one spot in the bike sim genre. Its release spawned an enormous following with what is quite simply the BEST motorcycle simulation on the market today. And although it seems a fairly easy sport to get into (oh, you know, accelerate, break, turn and so forth), true mastery of the game requires a bit of work. We're here to make that work a bit easier. We're nice like that.





## THE BIKES

Any biker who follows the FIM Motorcycle World Championship has their favourite team and rider. Whether it's the pure adrenaline rush of flying around a circuit full tilt or simply admiring the ballet that is man and machine in action, the primary cycle sim "grab" factor is those two wheeled marvels of modern mechanics strutting their awesome stuff. Listed are all of the bikes types available in GP500:

### HONDA NSR 500

Engine: two-stroke V4 water-cooled, 499cc  
Power: 188bhp  
Bore x Stroke: 54mm x 54.5mm  
Weight: 135kg  
Ideal Tracks: Mugello, Phillip Island  
Mighty Mick Doohan rode this steed to a record number of back-to-back world titles. The pure balance and ride-ability of this bike can only compare to its enormous power output. In the hands of someone like MD, the performance potential flies through the roof.

### HONDA NSR 500V

Engine: two-stroke V2 water-cooled, 499cc  
Power: 135bhp  
Bore x Stroke: 68mm x 68.8mm  
Weight: 101kg  
Ideal Tracks: Sachsenring, Johor  
Considerably smaller than its big brother V4, the 500V is a much lighter bike designed more for cornering and mid-range performance than high-end power. A great bike for those who are just starting out.

### YAMAHA YZR 500

Engine: two-stroke V4 water-cooled, 499cc  
Power: 184bhp  
Bore x Stroke: 54mm x 54mm  
Weight: 131kg  
Ideal Tracks: Paul Ricard, Brno  
A great all-round bike. Excellent handling, and supreme acceleration make this choice second only to the mighty NSR 500. A bike suited for the intermediate start-stop circuit.

### SUZUKI RGV 500

Engine: two-stroke V4 water-cooled, 499cc  
Power: 135bhp  
Bore x Stroke: 54mm x 54.5mm  
Weight: 131kg  
Ideal Tracks: Jerez, Brno  
Whilst not quite up to the standards of power output compared to some of its competitors, the Suzuki offers unmatched braking and cornering performance, ideal for the all-round rider.

### ELF MUZ

Engine: two-stroke V4 water-cooled, 499cc  
Power: 165bhp  
Bore x Stroke: 54mm x 54.5mm  
Weight: 131kg  
Ideal Tracks: Donnington Park  
The MUZ engine was originally designed for sidecar racing, and provides plenty of high-end raw power. However, for its size it's considerably overweight, and is a little sluggish around the bends.

### MODENAS KR3

Engine: two-stroke V3 water-cooled, 500cc  
Power: 165bhp  
Bore x Stroke: 59.5mm x

59.9mm  
Weight: 116kg  
Ideal Tracks: Jarama, Buenos Aires  
The KR3 was designed to bridge the gap between performance characteristics of V2 and V4 engines. This provides power comparable to that of a V4 with a remarkable 15kg weight advantage.

## TRACK MASTERY

It's important to note that learning a circuit should be done only in the GP500 practice mode. Being held up by a slower underpowered backmarker whilst trying to learn a new track can become frustrating at best, and often the AI will teach you bad habits, as they race to the conformity of a pre-programmed line.

Coming to grips with the style of driving required when racing with two wheels as opposed to four may be a daunting task at first, as you are guaranteed to be kissing the bitumen on a regular basis during the first few (or fifty) laps. However, as each circuit becomes more familiar, and the task of guiding the bike around the track begins to flow to your subconscious, you will soon find that your ability to ride at a fast pace is greatly increased.

## Memorise the track

When starting out on any circuit, it's extremely important to know the track layout. If you are not prepared for the next two or three turns in advance, the chances of a fast lap, let alone winning are almost zilch. This is why the first thing you should do prior



to taking on any new circuit is to commit the track map to memory, which can easily be accomplished by four or five casual laps. As you traverse the track, take note of the ideal entry and exit points for each corner, and pay attention to changes in elevation and banking, critical factors which can greatly affect the cornering ability of even the most stable bike.

## Add Some Speed

Once you are confident that you could draw the circuit map without having to think about it, you are ready for the next stage of mastering the track: the addition of speed! With the track map now locked firmly in the grey matter, start to be a little more adventurous by adding extra speed in the straights and corners. The process





# GAMEPLAY



XXXXXXXX cccc xxxx



from here is simply trial and error in order to discover the best speed and line for each corner. Try to anticipate your line a few corners ahead at a time, and pay close attention to your entry and exit points before and after each turn. By sticking to this method and simply completing lap after lap, you'll quickly find your confidence on the bike will increase ten-fold, and before you know it, you'll be consistently completing laps without incident.

Whilst constant grass surfing can be disheartening, take heed in the fact that you can crash the bike as much as you want without risk to life of limb. Experiment with entry and exit speed in turns, and when you're completely confident with your ability to take a corner, try new things in order to lower the lap times. Try braking a little later than you would normally feel comfortable with, as well as attempting to get on the power slightly earlier when exiting a turn.

Cornering on a 188bhp two-wheeled beast is an art form in itself, and will take some mastering before you can beat the likes of Criville or Doohan. The trick to it is sticking as close as possible to the inside line of each corner. Start your turn on the outside of the track and gradually weave to the inside at the corner midpoint then drift back out to the edge as you get on the power again. The ideal line for any racetrack is a curved path that takes your bike around each turn at the fastest possible speed whilst positioning the bike for minimal movement up any straights allowing for maximum acceleration prior to getting on the brakes again.

## Racing

With all this knowledge under your belt, you're ready for the next step, the race itself. Whilst your line around the track during a race

does not differ from the line you took during the practice session, it's important to note that there are twenty-three other bikes out there that want to win as bad as you do, and they will often do so at the expense of yours or another's driving line. Always maintain a high level of concentration whilst participating in a race, and be prepared for anything that could eventuate. Don't be too adventurous during the opening few laps when the bikes are bunched up, as one wrong move will send you back to last place lickety split.

Get in behind another rider, and stay there until your tyre gauges turn fully green, indicating that your rubber is now at optimum temperature. By attempting an overtaking manoeuvre before your tyres have had the chance to reach required temps, you are increasing the risk of sliding or high-siding the bike which will once again see you with the lucky last hat on. Once you have mastered the line at any chosen track, the key factors that decide whether you win or lose the race become overtaking and defending your position.

## SETTING UP THE BIKE

GP500 sports the most sophisticated setup features ever found in a motorcycle sim, and it's the understanding of these crucial mechanical elements that may just give you that advantage you're looking for. However, ultimately, adjusting any options found on the bike setup screen are done



primarily to make the job of controlling the bike easier for the rider.



## TYRES

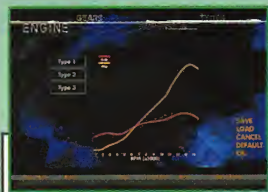
There are three selectable tyre compounds within GP500, being Hard, Medium and Soft. The harder compound is used primarily for long distance races as they last the longest, though, their capacity to grip the road is limited. Medium compound tyres are perfect for the shorter, sprint type races of ten to fifteen laps, and finally the Soft tyre compound is an ideal choice for qualifying and practice periods, offering the highest amount of grip, with a much faster rate of wear.



## SUSPENSION SYSTEM

Most of the circuits portrayed within GP500 are flat and smooth, offering little in the way of bumps and potholes. However, the advantages achieved by the adjustment of the suspension system is used to control the responsiveness of the bike during braking and cornering. The only way to figure out the ideal suspension configuration for you and your bike is to simply experiment with the options offered. Jump into practice mode and take the bike out for a quick spin. Take note of any areas where suspension performance could be improved, and adjust accordingly. Most important however is to only make one adjustment at a time. There is nothing more devastating to the modern racing driver than to develop a good racing setup, only to have it ruined by excessive suspension

modification. So remember, make only one change at a time, and take note of any increase or decrease in performance, and adjust to suit. There is a lot more involved in the suspension adjustment within GP500 (most details of which can be found in the manual), but, with the above as a general guideline, you can't go wrong.



## ENGINE

There are three choices when adjusting the output of the bikes engine. Type 1 setting, Type 2 and Type 3. Type 1 offers the best acceleration at the cost of top speed, which at the tighter twisty circuits is a good option, offering the acceleration for a stop-start track without the unnecessary high-end power. Type 2 is a more balanced setting, providing an overall performance with an average top speed compared to Type 3, with a decent level of acceleration. Type 3 is simply the opposite of type 1 with all the top speed your sprockets can handle at the expense of raw carving acceleration.



## GEARING

It is very important to understand the concepts of how gears affect the way an engine performs before beginning to alter gear ratios, and the GP500 manual describes this better than I could in a full page. Once a basic understanding of gears is present, you should note down the critical speeds of the track you will be adjusting them for. Try to change the sprockets according to the required acceleration points around the circuit. This will ensure

maximum speed along the straights and between corners.

## THE TRACKS

### TIPS AND TACTICS

#### SUZUKA

Suzuka is a tough circuit no matter which way you look at it. Opt for a setup with more high-end power than acceleration, as there is lots of opportunities for full throttle carving. As this is an extremely smooth circuit, adjusting for a slightly tighter suspension level than normal helps for those extra few kph whilst cornering.

#### JOHOR

Good acceleration is the key to Johor, a fast small circuit designed for the engine that is quick off the mark. The ideal braking point for turn two can be a little tough to manage at first, but with a little trial and error, it will soon become apparent. Try to aim for a third gear entry.

#### MUGELLO

Mugello is a classic Type 2 engine setting circuit. Offering wide open straights ideal for the top speed bike, the intricate complex of turns and chicanes which surround the two main straights require that extra bit of acceleration in order to maintain a decent pace. A few suspension adjustments for the few slightly banked turns can also help immensely.



## PHILLIP ISLAND

This homegrown track is commented by many drivers in the 500cc scene as the best on the planet. Its combination of extremely fast straights and turns with the tight action-packed midfield offers a riding experience like no other track today. Top speed is the only real engine setting for this track. However, to get the most out of PI, you're definitely going to need some serious study as the entry and exit points are particularly difficult to judge.



#### PAUL RICARD

Anyone who rides on the new improved Paul Ricard circuit in France quickly falls in love. With the combination of a quick flowing backfield, the two main straights, which are connected via a hairpin, offer the potential for pure speed. A cross between a Type 1 and Type 2 setting would be ideal for Paul Ricard, and through a combination of engine and gearing adjustments this can be easily achieved.

#### IMOLA

Imola has changed considerably since it's fatal dance with the F1 great Ayrton Senna. There are now two major chicanes on the once super-fast front stretch, and the awkward hairpin at the bottom of the hill has been replaced with a flowing 2nd to 1st gear right-hander. Type 2 is the ideal engine setting for this Italian track, and the mixture of steep climbs and descents demands some time spent in the garage perfecting the suspension.







# TECHNEWS

Silicon State Of The Art. By Ty Pendlebury.

Cyrix Returns • Virtual Ears • 4GHz IBM's • Everglide Hits OZ! • New Intel Chip Rumours

## S3 and nVidia Kiss and Make UP



In a remarkable twist to an ongoing tale, S3 and nVidia recently announced that they have agreed to enter into a broad seven year mutual patent cross-license agreement. As part of this agreement, the two companies have also agreed to dismiss their pending patent infringement lawsuits against each other.

You may recall that late last year, nVidia announced its intentions to sue then rival S3 over an undisclosed patent infringement. It was presumed at the time that this action was in turn a response to an

outstanding patent suit S3 had filed against nVidia in 1998.

All of which means it's more than a little strange to hear spokesmen from both camps singing the praises of the deal and each other. "Over the years, S3 has developed and acquired a rich portfolio of technologies in graphics, multimedia, microprocessors and system logic," said

nVidia CEO Jen-Hsun Huang. "Our license agreement with S3... gives us a strong technology base on which to build winning products."

Andrew Wolfe, S3's Chief Technology Officer,

was even more adamant: "S3 and nVidia rank as possibly the only two companies positioned to win long-term in the PC graphics market."

### New Linux chip to power "web tablets"

S3 Incorporated has announced a partnership with Transmeta Corporation to design and produce a new range of Internet devices powered by Transmeta's new Crusoe processor. The planned "internet device" will be a Web Tablet similar to the one below. The Crusoe line of CPUs, announced in January, are

128-bit software based and are fully x86 compatible. Because they run all their instructions through software they will also use less power than traditional chips. The instruction set for the processor can be upgraded with updates in a way similar to flashing a BIOS, thereby changing the chip's architecture. The chip uses code-morphing which enables it to run multiple platforms. To launch the new processor, Crusoe co-inventor and Quake-author Dave Taylor challenged Linux author Linus Torvalds to a Quake 3 deathmatch. Taylor used Windows 98 while Torvalds demoed the Crusoe running under Linux. Taylor beat Torvalds 3-0. Meanwhile, Transmeta are planning to release a workstation and server class x86 CPU based on the Crusoe architecture to compete with Intel's IA-64.

### Prototype devices

Jesus saves ... Cyrix?

Via Technologies, who took over the struggling Cyrix, have announced their latest Celeron-killer, named Joshua. It is squarely aimed at the budget-end of the market, and VIA admits it has "a lot of work to do in order to revive the Cyrix brand". The chip is based on the Socket 370 interface and features a 256 kb L2 cache, 0.18µm fabrication, a 133 MHz FSB, and 3DNow! support. The chip is expected to be on shelves as you read this. But is there any significance in the new chip's name?





In Hebrew, Joshua means "he shall save his people", and translates into Greek as Jesus. Could this be Cyrix's Second Coming?

### Immerse Yourself

It's true, we can now confirm that we are all turning into cyborgs. The humble human ear is the latest organ to be subjected to cyber-virtualisation. Sensaura has announced the development of its Virtual Ear technology, something that has the potential to revolutionise audio in games to a similar extent to 3D audio. The Virtual Ear allows gamers to customise the sound produced by games to more closely match that sound detected by the human ear. According to Sensaura's Principal Scientist, Alastair Sibbald, "There are considerable physiological variations in the sizes of our ears and heads. Sensaura Virtual Ear technology enables the listener to 'tune' the 3D signal-processing HRTFs precisely so as to match their own head and ear characteristics."

The Virtual Ear is compatible with DirectSound3D, EAX and A3D, and the first card to feature the technology will be Voyetra's Santa Cruz soundcard. To find out more about how 3D sound actually works - and the astounding effects it can have on games - check out our feature just over the page.



### GeForce and Athlon win awards

Nvidia and AMD have been the big winners from the Microprocessor Report Industry Awards in California. The GeForce 256 was named the best 3D accelerator of 1999 and AMD's Athlon was voted the best PC processor. MicroDesign Resources, the publisher of the Microprocessor Report, is recognized as the leading provider of in-depth analysis for the electronics industry.

### Rambus in trouble

The future looks grimmer by the day for Intel's favoured Rambus memory. Market research company Semico, in conjunction with Hyundai, predicts that Rambus will only achieve two per cent of the market during this year, and that by the year 2004, that will shrink to a minority share of 0.1 per cent, along with EDO RAM. Meanwhile, they predicted SDRAM, which is supposed to be superseded by Rambus, would hold 42.4 per cent of the market at the same time. This prediction comes after Intel's withdrawal of the 820 chipset at the last minute in order to enable it to incorporate SDRAM. There have also been reports that the DIMM risers that enable the SDRAM to be used can hamper performance when compared to the BX chipset.

### IBM Hit 4GHz

The International Solid-State Circuits Conference is the venue IBM chose to show off the design of its latest high-speed computer chip. Clocking between a mildly (Understatement alert! - Ed) impressive 3.3 and 4.5 GHz, the chip uses conventional silicon transistors and only requires 50% of the power usually needed by a high-performance chip. Sounds great. The only catch is that it's at least three years until chips like this will be available for use in your home PC. For now, just dream.

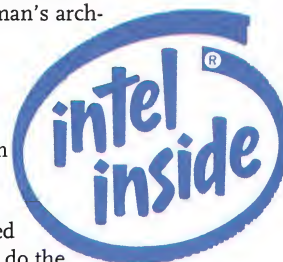


### Everglide gets Aussie distribution

From the kitchen to your desktop, the Everglide has had critics raving for months over the increased accuracy in FPS-style games. Unlike other mousepads, the Everglide is solid plastic and is favoured by hardcore Quake players such as Thresh (aka Dennis Fong). Until recently the pads have only been available from the Everglide website, but Aus PC Market ([www.auspcmarket.com](http://www.auspcmarket.com)) have gained exclusive rights to distribute them in Australia. In other news, the makers of Everglide have announced a new pad aptly named Giganta. This 9.5" x 11.5" monster is named after a mutated gorilla who was one of Wonder Woman's arch-enemies, no less.

### Itanium and 3D Studio Max

Intel's next generation processor, the IA-64 Itanium (previously known by the code named Merced) is continuing to do the software developer rounds on its way to a late 2000 release. Discreet plans to release a version of 3D Studio Max (the graphics program favoured by game developers) optimised for the Itanium processor. This updated version will take advantage of the advanced instruction set, increased memory space and scalability. Discreet also plans to release optimised versions of Autodesk Inventor and AutoCAD.





# SONIC SENSATION

**DANIEL RUTTER** EXPLAINS HOW TODAY'S GAMES USE POSITIONAL AUDIO TECHNOLOGY TO BRING 3D SOUND ALIVE.

In the real world, those two sound-detecting objects affixed to your skull let you tell with remarkable accuracy where sounds are coming from. (*I think he's talking about your ears - Anatomy Ed.*) Left, right, in front, behind, above, below - three dimensions of sound localisation, all from two detectors.

Positional audio, in computer parlance, is the technology used to make you think sounds are coming from particular locations around you, when they're really all coming from a few speakers, none of which are mounted above or below you (subwoofers don't count, as low bass is not directional).

## Good Reverberations

Mixed up in the positional audio concept is simulation of particular audio environments - the different reverberation and occlusion characteristics of different places. Reverberation, or reverb for short, is all of the reflections of a sound that make it to your ears sooner or later after the sound itself. Reverb in even a simple, flat-walled environment can be very complex indeed, since the echoes can reflect again and again as the sound decays. Reverb characteristics also change as you move around the room; reflections from a nearby wall will reach you sooner than those from a more distant one. And irregular environments, like a cave, can be outrageously complex to model.

Things are further complicated by the fact that when you're faking an audio environment with, say, four speakers, the aim of the exercise is to feed the speakers the right signal to reproduce at the listener's ear'oles more or less the right combination of direct and "reflected" sound. If the listener is uncooperative enough to move, the mix will be out of whack; positional audio programmers therefore have to try to make the area of fairly realistic sound as large as possible.

## VR Environments

Headphones get around the moving-target problem, but at the cost of making the



Games like Quake 3 Arena rely heavily on 3D sound.

soundstage move with the listener's head. Turn around and everything's backwards. Nifty virtual reality systems with head tracking can beat this problem, but don't look for one of them on the shelves of Clint's Crazy Bargains at any point in the near future.

The trick for positional audio designers is to model the behaviour of an environment as realistically as possible without exceeding the abilities of the equipment available. And the system they come up with has to be easy for other programmers to work with, too; it doesn't matter if it's the best sound modelling concept ever invented if nobody can put it in a game.

To this end, two main Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) have emerged in the positional audio world. Audio APIs work in the same way as 3D video APIs like OpenGL and

Glide and Direct3D; they're a standard system that other programmers can use to accomplish a really complex task without, themselves, having to know how the processing is done.

## Software Sound

DirectSound3D (DS3D) is Microsoft's DirectX component for positional audio. Games and other software can hook into DirectSound 3D and tell it where a sound is to be placed, how loud it is, how it changes with distance, whether it's directional, and so on. Then the DS3D sound card driver hooks into the sound card's specialised hardware to use rather complex algorithms, which are NOT Microsoft's work, to make the requisite signals. These algorithms are known as the "engine" used by the sound card, and cards with different engines

## THE BEST 3D SOUNDCARDS

### TERRATEC DMX SOUND SYSTEM

RRP: \$349

Distributor: Innvision

Supports: DS, DS3D, A3D, EAX

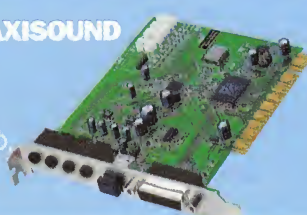


### GUILLEMOT MAXISOUND FORTISSIMO

RRP: \$119

Distributor: Ubisoft

Supports: DS, DS3D, A3D, EAX



### SOUNDBLASTER LIVE! PLATINUM OPTICAL

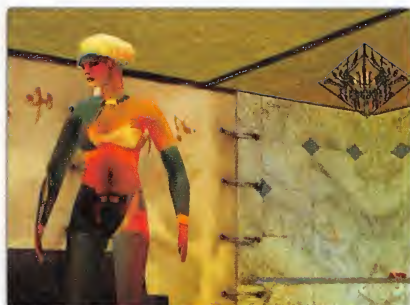
RRP: \$499

Distributor: Creative

Supports: DS, DS3D, A3D (2.0), EAX







Half a second away from plenty of sound - Half-Life.

#### System Shock 2's sound and music was one of the game's many highlights.

sound different, even though all of them might support DS3D or A3D (see below).

If your sound card doesn't HAVE positional audio hardware, DS3D can still do its thing, but in software, with all of the work done by the computer's CPU. The algorithm used for software DS3D is inferior to practically any 3D sound card's positional audio algorithms, but it's very processor-hungry and will cause a great big unacceptable performance hit, no matter how fast your computer is.

If your sound card has positional audio support built in, it may still use a lot of CPU time, depending on how much of the thinking it can do for itself. It'll also have to hit the CPU if you exceed the number of 3D sound streams - distinct positional audio sources - it can handle in hardware. If it has to start doing software mixing, down goes performance, and sound quality, again.

With DirectX 7, DS3D has hardware voice management support, which allows this nasty mixing to be minimised by feeding the important sounds to the hardware 3D sound streams. The less important sounds can go to the plain stereo mixer, which uses much less CPU power than software positional audio, or they can be dropped completely. Voice management was available for DS3D previously courtesy of QSound's manager software, made available as

an extension to DS3D and supported by Creative's Sound Blaster Live, among others. A3D (see below), though, has had hardware voice management for a while now.

#### Hardware Sound

EAX is Environmental Audio eXtensions, the PC environmental reverb standard created by Creative Labs, makers of the Sound Blaster line. EAX is an extension to Microsoft's DirectSound 3D, and Creative have made it a public standard for anyone to use - anybody's sound card can have EAX compatibility.

settings and proper modelling becomes more drastic when you start taking closed doors, obstacles and fancy reflections from funny-shaped rooms into account.

EAX actually doesn't have anything to do with positional audio - by itself, it's just reverb, and a game must also support DirectSound 3D if sounds are to come from particular locations. The upcoming EAX 2 promises to add positional audio and room-shape support, including "occlusion" - blocking of sound by obstacles. But A3D 2.0 already has them.

A3D is the positional audio standard created

**"...TO MAKE YOU THINK SOUNDS ARE COMING FROM PARTICULAR LOCATIONS AROUND YOU.."**

The original EAX version 1 implements environmental audio effects by using 26 pre-programmed presets of much the same nature as those used by home theatre amplifiers for ambience enhancement - stage, hall and room reverb, for instance. The various presets can be further tweaked by changing the level of the reverb compared with the original sound, and the preset in use can be changed at any time, but EAX 1 has no ability to truly simulate how things would sound in a particular shape of room. The difference between pre-programmed

by Aureal, makers of a series of high-powered audio chipsets, back when Microsoft hadn't yet figured out that hardware acceleration was a good thing, and so DS3D didn't support it.

Version 1 of A3D is much like EAX; version 2 of A3D can more accurately simulate how sound sources in a complex environment behave, by using information on the shape of the environment provided by the game. A3D 1 and EAX have no real idea what shape a room is - they only know where the sound sources are within it.



# TECH

## HOTWARE

# VIPER II

**RRP: \$430**

**Distributor: Diamond (02) 9640 2350**

**Controller: S3 Savage2000**

**Bus Type: AGP 4X/2X**

**Memory: 32MB SDRAM**

**Horizontal Sync Signals: 31.5KHz-108.5KHz**

**Vertical Refresh: 60Hz-200Hz**

**Maximum Dot (Pixel) Rate: 350MHz**

**RAMDAC**

**API Support: Direct X, OpenGL**

**Minimum System Config: AGP slot, PII 233 or AMD K6-2, 32MB RAM**

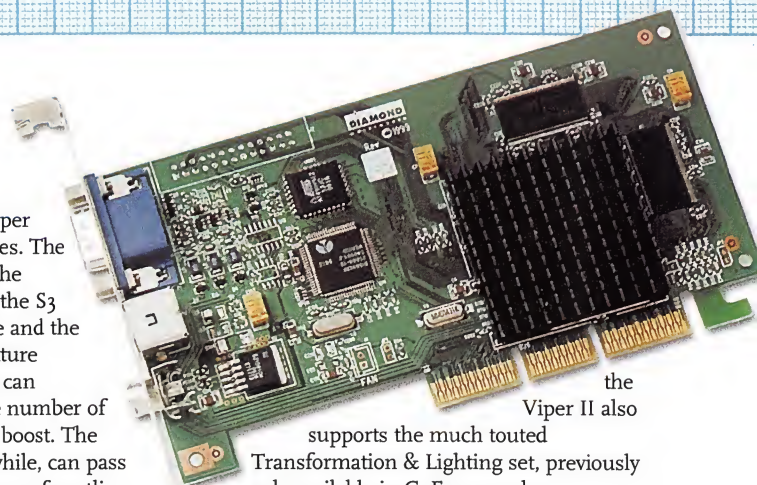
■ Who'd have thought that S3 would make such a dramatic re-entry into the video card market? With the S3 Savage2000 chipset on board, the Viper II is a hot little piece of hardware.

This card is fast, outperforming chipsets like the venerable TNT2 Ultra and the Voodoo3 3500

in games that support the Viper II's extended graphics features. The two main features that give the Viper II its sheer speeds are the S3 Texture Compression engine and the QuadTexture Engine. S3 Texture Compression (S3TC) engine can compress up to six times the number of pixels for a big performance boost. The QuadTexture Engine meanwhile, can pass through multi-textures (the use of multi-texturing - the diversification of pixel elements) in one pass (up to four types) instead of one at a time.

While multi-texturing in games isn't exactly prolific, most upcoming titles will support this feature.

Not only is the Viper II fast, it provides quality too. Featuring all manner of 3F features,



the Viper II also supports the much touted Transformation & Lighting set, previously only available in GeForce cards.

The Viper II also comes with a TV out connector, giving users DVD support (the card also ships with SoftDVD player software).

Overall, the Viper II is a blistering card for its price point, with solid performance and ease of use. Perfect for serious gamers, and a viable alternative to the TNT2.

## HOTWARE

# ASUS AGP V6600 DELUXE GEFORCE 256

**RRP: \$499**

**Distributor: Cassa Australia (02) 5445 2992**

■ This is the Deluxe version of the ASUS V6600 GeForce card we reviewed in PCPP #45. The only basic differences of the deluxe over the no-frills model are that this version comes with TV/video in/out jacks, a DVD software player, ASUS 3D glasses and bundle of games (full versions of Drakan and Rollcage, as well as cut down versions of ten other popular games) and

video software (including the ASUS DVD player and Ulead VideoStudio).

As far as core graphics performance, this card is identical to the standard V6600. Here's what we said of that card in our previous review:

"(the) manufacturers have followed nVidia's reference design closely. What we have here is a plain GeForce card with a 32MB frame buffer."

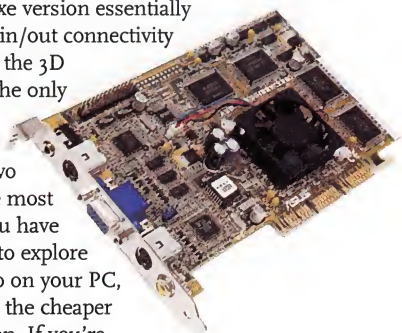
"The image quality of the GeForce is stunning. If you have ever had the pleasure of seeing a TNT2 in action, the GeForce offers identical quality. However, expect image quality to be coupled with stunning frame rates and the ability to run 32-bit colour at acceptable speeds. You can also be confident that you can run all your games at a beautiful 1280 x 1024 resolution. After using 32-bit colour in Quake3, it really is hard to go back to the lacklustre 16-bit."

"A very respectable offering from one of the

world's leading manufacturers."

The ASUS GeForce cards are indeed very respectable pieces of hardware.

As the deluxe version essentially offers only TV in/out connectivity as extra (forget the 3D glasses), then the only thing left to consider is which of the two cards would be most desirable. If you have no inclination to explore DVD and video on your PC, then stick with the cheaper standard version. If you're looking for an all-in-one solution, the V6600 deluxe offers respectable DVD and video capabilities, as well as blistering game performance.



## SPECIFICATIONS

Total power output: 25 watts RMS

Frequency response: 38 Hz - 20 kHz

Input impedance: 10,000 ohms

Power source: AC 90V-240V (auto-switching)

\*Automatic on/off sound detection system

\*Volume & bass controls for precise audio adjustment

\*Integrated power supply

## HOTWARE

# LOGITECH SOUND MAN XI

**RRP: \$69.95**

**Distributor: Logitech (02) 9972 3711**

■ The Soundman G1 three-piece sound package is a perfect short-to-medium solution till you save enough pennies for the huge twenty-piece upgrade. The sub-woofer provides that bassy dimension to your sound, but struggles when you start to hit any decent volume. Perfect, really, for users in apartment buildings or with rather unforgiving roommates.

Since this kit wasn't designed to handle any major decibel thoroughfare, the speakers are quite small and compact. The satellite speakers have a tiny footprint (they go up rather than out), so take up minimal desk space.

Quality speakers that bark more than bite for space conscious buyers.





**HOTWARE**

# GRAVIS EXTERMINATOR DUAL CONTROL

**RRP: \$99.95****Distributor: ACCO**  
**(02) 9700 0180**

Joysticks don't require altogether too much in the form features, which goes part of the way to explain why manufacturers seem to go out of their way to get our attention with gimmicks and far-out designs.

The Xterminator Dual Control only break from the norm is a control pad-style console to the left of the main stick - which gives your free left hand easy access to a further five buttons, a throttle gauge, and a second direction-pad/hat button. The idea is that this second d-button transforms the unit into a first-person shooter controller (the thumbstick for movement, the main stick for aim) for games like Mechwarrior and Heavy Gear. For faster shooters like Quake and Tribes, nothing beats the mouse, still.

Otherwise, the Xterminator is standard joystick fare. It's sturdy, but features the most awkward hat switch ever seen on a joystick.

**HOTWARE**

# HAMMERHEAD FX

**RRP: \$89.95****Distributor: Dataflow (02) 9417 9700**

While the HammerHead FX first grabs your attention with its sleek and comfortable-looking design, it is its rumble capability that really makes this control pad a joy to behold. Now we don't know about you, but we're sold on the whole rumble idea. While not as useful as force feedback, the good ol' 'shake when your goose has been baked' feature (as first seen with the Nintendo 64 joypad) has its merits. No, really. Once you've experienced the sensation, it's quite difficult to go back to static peripherals.

Minus the gimmick, the Hammerhead FX is a fantastic controller, it's solidly constructed and features a slew of programmable buttons. It also features dual analog thumbsticks - and though these may not be useful for most games suited for controllers, are perfect for games like Descent 3 (an OEM version ships with the pad).

One of (if not) the best control pad on the market.



# THE BEAST

**CPU: AMD Athlon 800MHz****RRP: \$1400**

The Athlon has proved itself, passing the gamer's test for floating point performance (equals fast Quake) and so far there's no sign of any AMD weirdness typical in their previous CPUs, like rapid overheating and a patch for every game. Just plain fast.

**Graphics Card: ASUS GeForce AGP-V6600****RRP:**

Even lacking DDR memory, this GeForce card is a wee ripper. Crank those games into 32-bit colour and never look back. Also features fantastic DVD support.

**Sound Card: SB Live! Platinum Optical****RRP: \$499**

After all this time, the SB Live! is still the best all round 3D sound card (supports A3D 2.0 and EAX) for a gaming beast.

**Motherboard: ASUS K7M****RRP: \$329**

The best Athlon board around. Uses the hot VIA Southbridge controller chipset. Overclockable within BIOS, and is generally the best quality Athlon board going.

**Hard drive: Quantum Fireball KA****18.2Gb****RRP: \$445**

With a huge 512Kb buffer and 7200 rpm speed, this is storage city for months to come.

**Monitor: Sony 500PS (21")****RRP: \$3899**

Big, flat and big. It's a Sony, it's the best. Just make sure you've got a sturdy enough desk space to house this beast.

**Mouse: Logitech Laptop Mouse****RRP: \$69.95**

Our love affair with the Intellimouse Explorer is over. This one is smaller (which is just that much more comfortable), sleeker, and black. Enough said.

**Network adaptor: 3Com****RRP: \$140**

100Mbps of gaming goodness. Reliable and compatible.

**Speakers: Imagination Technologies Sirocco****RRP: \$1195**

True audiophile equipment for gamers.

**Case: Supermicro SC750A****RRP: \$300**

Plenty of room for advanced cooling, looks the business and has slide away side panels.

After a temporary and easily remedied glitch in our technical department, The Beast makes a return this month in proper working order.

The premise is simple: each month we'll detail the most desirable gaming PC out there. The kind of PC that will bring immense pleasure and satisfaction in all ventures gaming related. And the beast is not about affluence and snobbery either. It's about the best equipment possible to help you get the most out of a wonderful gaming life. There's nothing like feeling your gaming beast purr...





# SETUP

**DANIEL RUTTER** UNRAVELS THE GREAT MYSTERY THAT IS PC TECHNOLOGY.

## WRITE TO:

**Setup**  
**PC PowerPlay**  
**PO BOX 634**  
**Strawberry Hills**  
**NSW 2016**  
 setup@pcpowerplay.next.com.au

When you write remember to include as much pertinent information as possible. Send your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT and any associated \*.INI files for Windows that might tell me more about your problem. Give me as detailed an explanation as you can and be sure to include as much detail as possible about your PC. Feel free to email your questions or, if you want to snail mail, please remember to write clearly or better still print your letters. Please note that due to the volume of messages we receive, we cannot guarantee a response to your queries.

## 1820 ON THE CHEAP?

**Q>** Does the new Intel Camino motherboard support the Celeron processor so I can take advantage of huge F.S.B speeds (overclockers best friend), RDRAM and 4 speed AGP without the cost of a PIII?

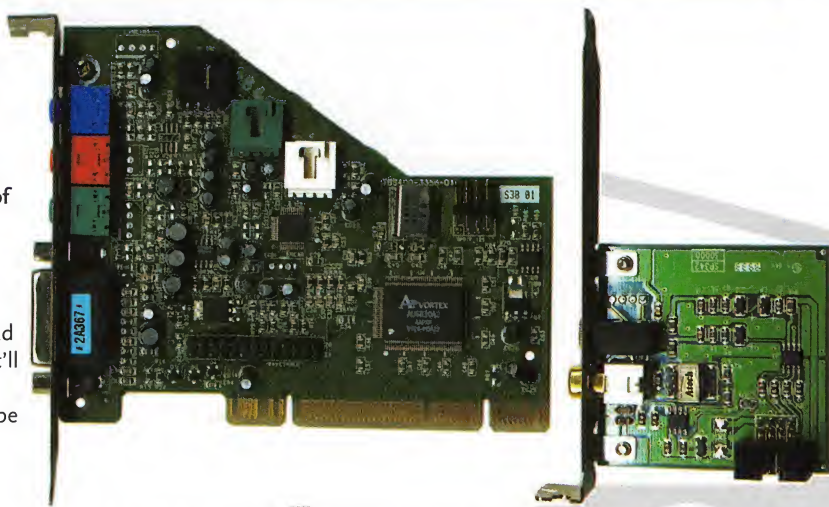
### Xcaliba, Internet

**A>** Without the cost of a PIII? How about the cost of RDRAM, dude?! By the time you read this, it'll be cheaper - heck, maybe it'll only cost FOUR times as much as SDRAM! And maybe you'll actually be able to BUY it in Australia! Wow, wouldn't that be great!

If you decide to get a Camino (i820 chipset) board that uses ordinary SDRAM memory modules, the translation hardware that lets the newer chipset talk to the old-style RAM will knock 5% to 15% off the performance of the computer, depending on what you're doing. Whoopee.

Getting to your question, though, you CAN use a PPGA Celeron with a Camino board. You'll need a Slot 1 adaptor board (or "slotket"; the gizmo that makes square-socket Plastic Pin Grid Array Celerons fit into standard Slot 1 connectors) which has a FSB jumper to make the Celeron report itself as a 100MHz part. Camino boards won't even boot if you put a slower-than-100MHz Front Side Bus (FSB) processor on 'em, which rules out the old Slot 1 Celerons.

This is a problem, because few current Celerons work from 100MHz FSB. Sure, the old 300 and 333 and maybe 366 and, perhaps, even 400s



A Turtle Beach Montego II Quadzilla; two speakers plug into the main card, two into the daughter-card.

may work from 100MHz - at 450, 500, 550 and a pretty unlikely 600MHz, respectively - but with anything faster, you're dreamin'. Current Celerons have large locked multipliers, so you want a slower FSB, not a faster one. 75MHz or 83MHz FSB is more useful for recent Celerons, and i820 supports these lower speeds not at all.

## QUADROPHILIA

**Q>** I'm looking at getting a 4 speaker sound set up for my computer, and I was wondering if it would work with my current soundcard (a Creative Vibra 128), or if I would have to get another card.

### Frosty

**A>** Well, that depends on what you mean by "4 speaker sound". If you just want speakers in front of you and speakers behind you, you can do it with a 1/8th inch Y-adaptor from any electronics store. Plug the adaptor into your sound card lineout, plug a set of amplified speakers into each adaptor output, put 'em where you want 'em, turn 'em up a bit more than usual (two outputs means half the level, and also means using unamplified speakers and the sound card speaker output straining the sound card amplifier), and you're in business.

If you want proper surround sound, though, with different signals going to the front and the back, you'll need a sound card with genuine four speaker output. There are quite a lot of these around now - various Sound Blaster Live! models, for instance, and lots of cards using Aureal's Vortex 2 chipset, like the Turtle Beach Montego II Quadzilla, the Diamond Monster Sound MX300, and Aureal's own recently released line of cards.

## VANISHING RESOURCES...

I have 128 Mb of RAM and yet after a few hours of gameplay on my computer I frequently find I have around 30% System Resources free. I also make web pages for a living and when I am making a site or set of images, I find I have as little as 2% System Resources free.

I have a fair amount of fonts and one friend said it could be this that is the cause of the problems. I can't quite work it out. The images I work with aren't large and the resources are eaten up at a astonishing rate.

Most people I know have some form of resource problem and like to put it down to just being a "M\$" product related problem. I for one would rather a better explanation and

## TECH TIPS

### AWFUL AUDIO

**Do your speakers sound weird? Do they sound weird without you even knowing it? Here's how to find out. If your computer's speakers have spring terminals on them that take a couple of bare wires - many amplified speaker sets with the amp in one speaker have bare-wire terminals on the other speaker - it's possible to wire them "out of phase", where one speaker's cone moves outwards when the other one moves inwards, when they're both getting the same signal. This stuffs up stereo imaging, kills a lot of bass and makes the whole setup sound as if you've got a bad head cold.**

**If your speakers can be wired either way, try swapping the wiring on one, and see if the sound gets dramatically better, or dramatically worse. You won't hurt anything by swapping the phase of a speaker.**



# LETTER OF THE MONTH

## CONSOLE VERSUS PC...

**Q>** I'm sure any PC gamer that has taken some time to look over the technical specifications of a Dreamcast or the up coming Playstation2 has thought to themselves if it can produce great graphics, sound and gameplay with these components why can't my PC with components that dwarf these do it? What is key to this mystery of the console, how do they do it? The Dreamcast has (correct me if I'm wrong) something like a 200mhz processor and 24mb of RAM that is shared around and it can produce graphics as good as my Pentium3 450mhz with 128mb of RAM and a 32mb TNT2. Please shed some light on the topic if you can.

**Pena, Internet**

**A>** There are two things you need to know to understand how console and PC game capabilities compare.

First - consoles are specialised objects. Every component of a console is tuned to its one purpose. PCs are general purpose computers, with great expandability, whereas consoles are, by and large, unchangeable. This also means that people coding for consoles are coding for exactly one hardware configuration, and can tweak and twiddle their games to fit the console's particular capabilities like a glove. PC coders have to make their software work on disparate platforms.

The big secret, though, is in understanding how cheap consoles manage to produce 3D graphics the seeming equal of those from top-line PCs. Well, they don't. That's because they output to a TV, not a computer monitor.

When you output to a TV, all you need is 640 by 480, and no more than 50 frames per second (60 frames per second for US consoles, because of their lower resolution, higher refresh rate NTSC video standard, versus our PAL). Actually, not even that: PAL TVs only display 25 full FRAMES per second, each composed of two interlaced FIELDS which fill in alternate lines.

Now, a 50Hz refresh rate interlaced 640 by 480 video on a computer monitor looks, to quote Bart Simpson, craptacular. So how do the consoles get away with it?

Simple enough, really. TVs are fuzzy, and you don't sit too close to 'em. Monitors are far sharper, with much higher resolution, and you sit so much closer that even a small monitor takes up more of your field of view than a big-screen TV at normal viewing distances. On a monitor, the difference between 640 by 480 and 1280 by 960 (which has four times as many pixels, and demands four times as much pure video throughput) is obvious. On a TV, you couldn't pick it.



**LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS THE MOST EXCELLENT SIDEWINDER AND DUAL STRIKE CONTROL PADS FROM MICROSOFT'S PREMIERE RANGE OF GAME CONTROLLERS. CHEERS MICROSOFT!**

Consoles also run at lower bit depths than many current PC graphics cards can; every popular card on the market at the moment except for 3dfx's various Voodoos can do 32 bit colour, but a Dreamcast, for instance, does only 16 bit. In the final analysis, 640 by 480 in 16 bit at 25 frames per second versus 1280 by 960 in 32 bit at (say) 50 frames per second is a 16-fold difference in the amount of output data the video subsystem has to handle. The proof is in the picture.

any tips on freeing up as many and as much system resources as possible.

**Christian Bullow, Internet**

**A>** Windows 95-series operating systems - which means Wings, Win98 and the "Millennium" version of Windows 2000 - have some nasty legacies from previous versions of Windows. "System Resources" is one of them.

System Resources are a separate thing from physical RAM, which is the amount of memory you've got plugged into your motherboard. The System Resource areas are small portions of that memory used by Windows to keep track of open windows, draw things on the screen, and do similar basic tasks. All Windows v.3 used for these purposes, and for storing other data including information on the fonts available, was 64 kilobytes of DOS memory. Windows 95 split the item categories up and considerably increased the limits, but it still has little teeny blocks of memory for several important categories. The font area is separate from the others and so installing fonts up to the maximum of 1,000 won't cut into resources elsewhere - but having tons of fonts will slow your Windows startup down, and may cause sluggish behaviour in programs that look at all of them.

Every application and every

window you open eats some resources. Some apps eat only a few percent, some eat far more. One of the worst System Resource hogs in common use, for instance, is Eudora Pro 4, which can easily use up more than 90% of the resource pool all by itself when it has lots of messages and mailboxes open. When System Resources fall below about 15%, Windows starts behaving oddly, and may become highly unstable.

All of this isn't too much of a problem, if programs behave themselves. When you close a program, it should hand back all of the resources it was using, just as it should free up all of the regular RAM it used. But some apps - many apps, in fact - DON'T behave themselves properly, and leave some or all of the things they used tied up when they quit.

Programs with severe "memory leaks", or system resource leaks, are very annoying. They're out there, and it sounds as if you're running at least one. The only solution is to not run the offending apps and quit them and run them and quit them in one session, or to resign yourself to rebooting your PC a lot. Or you could find better software.

Or to switch to Windows NT, or Windows 2000 Professional or Server - Win2000 is Windows NT 5 in all but name. While NT is far from uncrashable, it at least has no

System Resource limits. Under NT, you will NEVER open a window in Eudora and then find everything's gone all wiggly because Windows no longer has enough marbles left.

## K7 CONUNDRUM

**Q>** Just a quick motherboard issue. Some time ago in a preview of the K6III and K7 chips in your mag you mentioned that the K7's clock speed would be a multiplication of a whopping 200MHz front side bus. Well I've just bought one and so has my friend, but his ASUS K7M board's main bus can only be set at 150MHz max. Are there any K7 boards that support 200MHz FSB, or will there be? Otherwise they wouldn't be much more appealing (in my eyes) over Coppermine on 133MHz bus with .18 micron manufacture and speedy L2 cache access, wouldn't they? This worries me because it was THE MAIN REASON I bought K7 and didn't wait for Coppermine.

**Aaron Macdonald., Internet**

**A>** Rest assured, your K7 DOES run at 200MHz bus speed. But, as you note, the K7M doesn't support anything like that in its Front Side Bus (FSB) speed settings, and indeed by default it (and every other K7 motherboard) runs at 100MHz. You'll notice, if you try fiddling, that you probably can't select a bus speed

## READER'S TECH TIPS

### CD-ROM TIP:

**CD-ROM tip:**

If you put a CD into your CD drive and you want to stop the autorun, simply hold down the shift key for about five seconds.

**Easy.**

(Of course, you can also turn off autorun permanently by disabling Auto Insert Notification in the properties for that CD-ROM drive, from Device Manager - Ed)  
**Clifton Shipway**



## READER'S TECH TIPS

### PLEASE INSERT... NOTHING!

Sick and tired of Windows asking for the Win95/98 CD every time you change one darn setting? Put your Windows files on your hard drive! If you put the contents of the Win95 directory (or the Win98 directory, or the I386 directory in the case of Windows NT and 2000) onto a hard drive on a machine without Windows installed, and run the Setup program from that hard disk directory, the machine will always look at that directory by default whenever it needs what it still thinks is the "Windows CD". If you want to change the default directory an existing Windows install looks at, though, you'll want to run RegEdit (just go to Start -> Run... and type its name) and then go to HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE -> Software -> Microsoft -> Windows (or Windows NT) -> CurrentVersion -> Setup in the left panel. There'll be a key called SourcePath; if you double-click it and change its value to whatever your new Windows file directory is (say, C:\WIN98), you'll be in business.

significantly higher than 100MHz and have your machine actually work - 150MHz is ridiculously high.

So what the heck's going on? Dual Data Rate (DDR), that's what! The Athlon's Alpha-derived EV6 bus protocol means it talks to the motherboard chipset at 200MHz, using DDR technology to clock this CPU bus on both the rising and falling sides of the 100MHz clock waveform. EV6 supports up to twice this bandwidth, but no current Athlon motherboard does.

So, on all current Athlon boards, the processor's bus to main memory is still 100MHz (or whatever trivially higher FSB setting you might manage to achieve). The 200MHz processor to chipset bus gives Athlon machines substantially better overall RAM bandwidth, but in true sustained transfer tests (we're talking serious rendering applications, or supercomputer number crunching), the 800 megabyte per second ceiling speed of PC100 RAM shows through.

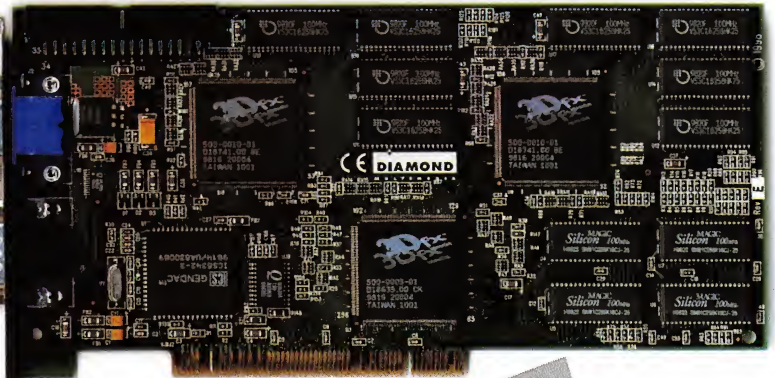
### V2 WITH TNT2?

**Q>** I have recently purchased and installed my brand new Diamond TNT2 Ultra V770 AGP. This card replaces my old rig of a creative Voodoo 2 PCI and 8Mb ATI AGP card.

Now call me crazy [OK. You're crazy - Ed], but what if I installed my Voodoo 2 with my viper v770 ultra using the pass through cable provided with my Voodoo 2?

Would that give me any speed increase, or would it make absolutely no difference at the end of the day?

Luke Martini, Internet



Old Voodoo 2s like this Monster 3D 2 still work fine with current video cards, though there's not much reason to own one any more.

**A>** A lot of people misunderstand how 3dfx Voodoo 2 and the earlier Voodoo Graphics (or "Voodoo 1", or just plain "Voodoo") cards work. They don't communicate with the main graphics card in the computer at all. That passthrough cable on the back just passes through the signal from the main graphics card when it's doing stuff. When you activate the 3dfx card by running a game that's been set to use it, the main graphics card does nothing, and the Voodoo card takes over output, sending 3D graphics to the monitor. 3D is all a Voodoo or Voodoo 2 card knows how to do, which is why you need another graphics card as well.

There's absolutely nothing stopping you from installing a Voodoo card along with some more recent board - a TNT2 like your V770, for instance. If you play games that don't work properly using any 3D API (Application Programming Interface) but 3dfx's proprietary Glide one, doing this is an excellent idea; the Voodoo card can be used for the Glide-only games, and the TNT2 for anything that works properly with OpenGL or Direct3D. You can use Direct3D with the Voodoo board as well, and also play a few OpenGL games (Quake 2 and 3, essentially). But the TNT2 will be faster, can do 32 bit colour versus the 3dfx board's 16 bit, and can handle much higher resolutions than the 800 by 600, which is all you can wring out of a single Voodoo 2. NVIDIA's OpenGL support is complete, too; 3dfx's is, was and possibly always will be flaky.

### WINDOWS NETWORKING...

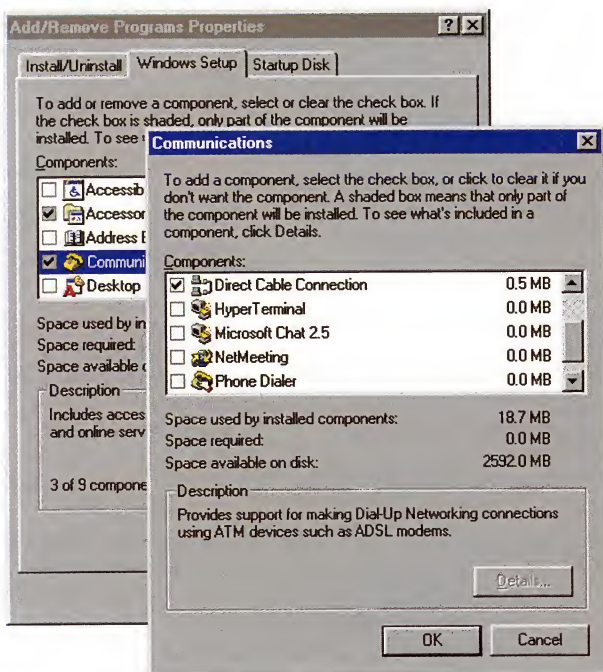
**Q>** I'm on a limited budget right now but I want to network my two AMD K6-2 300 computers together without getting a network card. I heard about direct cable connection but I don't know what it is and how much. Could you shed some light on this topic for me?

Mark Xiong, Internet

**A>** Direct Cable Connection (or DCC) is a Windows networking component that comes free with the operating system. It's worth what you pay.

Assuming you've got Windows 95 or 98, you may have DCC installed already; if you do, there'll be a Start -> Programs -> Accessories -> Communications -> Direct Cable Connection item. If there isn't, you can install DCC from Control Panel -> Add/Remove Programs -> Windows Setup -> Communications. When Windows settles down from the screaming electric conniption it always has whenever you change the smallest detail of its configuration, you'll be able to go to the above option and set up a connection. The options in the DCC Wizard are pretty simple, but to make the actual physical connection you'll need a "null modem" serial cable, or a Laplink parallel cable. Serial is OK, if you've got a spare serial port, but with a top speed of no more than 115,200 bits per second, you're going to move no more than 14 kilobytes of raw data per second, and you'll probably get 10k or less per second of useful throughput. Parallel, on the other hand, is quite fast - it can approach the speed you'll get from a cheapo 10 megabit network card - but when data's being moved over the parallel port, your computer will probably slow down quite severely.

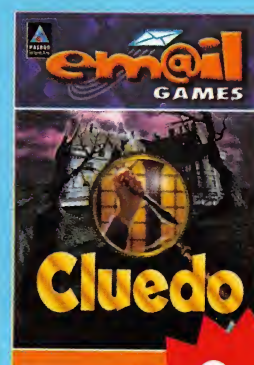
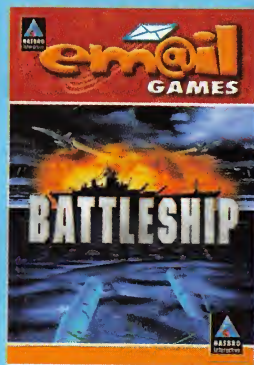
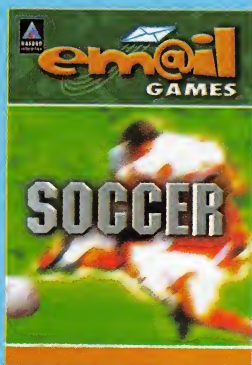
Since you'll have to get a cable anyway, you could instead put the money towards a couple of network cards and a proper network cable instead. Old ISA NE2000-compatible network cards can be had for functionally nothing second hand; get a couple with both 10Base2 (coaxial) and 10BaseT (modular jack) connectors, and either a 10Base2 cable, two T-pieces and two terminators or a 10BaseT crossover cable for about the same money, and you'll be in business, with a PROPER network.



Installing the Direct Cable Connection Windows component.



# Stop playing with yourself in the office



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# DISC 1

## SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

**Developer:** Activision  
**Category:** Firstperson Shooter  
**Need:** P200, 64MB, SVGA, 3D Card  
**3D:** 3DFX  
**Multiplayer:** TCP/IP, IPX

■ You're the world's deadliest soldier of fortune and your mission is clear: survive. Track your prey across the globe in a series of secret missions to take down a fanatical terrorist organization - before it takes YOU down. Maintain your cover as a covert warrior in a startling variety of explosive missions ranging from underhanded sabotage to stealthy assassination to full frontal assaults where skill marks the difference between the hunter and the hunted. Welcome to the secret world of the mercenary.

Based on the popular magazine of the same name, Soldier of Fortune delivers the most realistic, covert-operative themed shooter ever created. Soldier of Fortune is the all-new, explosive firstperson shooter created by Raven Software. Like a blockbuster action-thriller, Soldier of Fortune plunges players into the secret and deadly world of the modern-day gun-for-hire via dozens of real-to-life missions spanning five continents and innovative multiplayer modes.



### 3D Ultra Lionel TrainTown

**Developer:** Sierra  
**Category:** Board/Puzzle  
**Need:** P120, 16MB, SVGA  
**3D:** N/A  
**Multiplayer:** N/A

■ Lionel TrainTown features the irreverence found only in 3D Ultra games! You'll be amazed at the hilarious and zany jobs you'll need to complete; everything from delivering supplies, to tests of memory, to a dung-sorting contest with Farmer MacDonald's cows. Lionel TrainTown features authentic replicas of Lionel

cars and engines! There are over thirty different cars across five wild and surprise-filled landscapes.

### Clans

**Developer:** Strategy First  
**Category:** Roleplaying  
**Need:** P120, 32MB, SVGA  
**3D:** N/A  
**Multiplayer:** TCP/IP

■ Clans is a compelling story of four ancient races who for centuries fought amongst each other, while under the control of an evil demon bent on destroying them all. The Elders of each Clan



## ALLEGIANCE

**Category:** Strategy (Real Time)  
**Developer:** Microsoft  
**Need:** P200, 32MB, SVGA  
**3D:** Direct 3D  
**Multiplayer:** TCP/IP - 3 to 15 players

■ Allegiance, the upcoming multiplayer space combat game from the minds of Microsoft Research, combines the challenges of tactical squad-based combat, intense one-on-one space dogfights, and graphical and sound effects into a space-action experience.

It all takes place on the MSN Gaming Zone. You can elect to get into the action immediately in death-match style arenas, or pledge Allegiance to one of the diverse factions and join a squadron. And when you play on the Allegiance Zone, you'll be able to engage hundreds of players, compete in tournaments, and access exclusive additional civilisations.

## PATCHES

- A problem with equipping a faction-specific weapon while in multiple factions has been fixed.
- A fix has been applied for the problem of AI turning off after application of the patch.
- A problem with swapping portraits causing loss of tooltips has been fixed.
- The problem with multiple stat bonuses not being applied that was introduced in the beta patch has been fixed (the Charisma bug).

### Ultima IX: Ascension v1.18F Patch

- Fixed a crash in Valoria, involving a creeper plant.
- Fixed a plot-stopper involving the demons in Valoria.
- Fixed a plot-stopper involving Shamino's conversation.
- Fixed a crash in Wrong, involving an NPC who was attempting to go to an invalid location.
- Fixed a lockup in Wrong involving getting your backpack returned.
- Fixed a crash involving invalid music playing after a game is loaded.
- Fixed a crash involving the Jade Bracelet for sale in Paws.
- Fixed an audio problem involving the Avatar's sounds not playing in Windows 95. NOTE: If you modified your 'Options.ini' file to attempt to get these sounds playing, please revert/undo your changes. After this patch is installed, please set UseNotify=0 and Rolloff=1.0.
- Fixed a crash in the near-endgame scene involving Lord British and Blackthorn.
- Fixed a bug involving creature generators that was creating problems with collision.
- Fixed a problem on startup where the EAX environmental settings were either being set incorrectly, or preventing startup altogether.
- Made additional D3D improvements. D3D is now native to DirectX 7. Supports bilinear filtering of alpha textures in 16-bit via multipass rendering of the same texture, if that feature is supported on the given D3D hardware.
- Compressed textures are now properly supported on all platforms except nVidia's; this is a driver issue. The Savage4 card is one of the top performers as a result.
- GeForce is now supported properly.
- Screen shots in Voodoo2 SLI mode now work properly.
- Fixed numerous moderate memory leaks.
- Fixed a severe memory leak that would manifest if you open a book, then Alt-Tab away from the game.
- Lifts received a code overhaul, and now function more reliably. If the Avatar moves while on a lift, the lift halts its movement until the Avatar stands still.
- Fixed a problem with the Moonglow boat lift where you would sometimes fall through it.
- Fixed a vertical lift in Hythloth that was unreliable.
- Fixed a vertical lift in Yew; added a button at ground-level to





## PATCHES

summon it.

- Fixed several inventory gold overflow crashes.
- Sometimes, starting a new game in version 1.06 (Patch #2) would not work properly; this is now fixed.
- Fixed several problems in the Spirit summoning rituals.
- Numerous bugs in the installer have been fixed. If you re-install the game with the fixed installer (available on the remastered CD), the game installs more reliably and runs more smoothly.
- The new install handles installation of DXMedia, which is required for movies to work properly.
- Suppressed humming and whistling of the Avatar, and any NPC who is in the process of dying.
- Added an LODScale value to OPTIONS.INI; scales the distance at which LODs change.
- Avatar coughing & whistling is eliminated.
- You can no longer charm the Guardian.
- If you put more than 2047 objects into a single room-sized area, the game now issues a fatal error and exits (before it would just crash).

### Nocturne Patch

This version fixes problems with hardware mixing and SoundBlaster Live cards.

It allows 2MB ATI 3D Expression cards to start Nocturne.

This version fixes various script anomalies that could prevent Nocturne from operating correctly under unusual circumstances. An example is little Tommy will start his dialog in the church even if he has somehow gotten stuck on a pew.

The ambient sound for Act 1 will now play, but only if you have done a complete install.

This patch version includes a fix that allows Voodoo3 cards running the 1.03.00 drivers (or later) from 3Dfx to run at full speed with hardware acceleration.

Some current saved games in Nocturne may be "invalidated" by this patch. You can load your saved game, but if Nocturne gives a warning, you SHOULD NOT use that saved game.

### Wheel of Time 333 Patch

There are several new features in Version 333:

- Player ID (point your cursor at a player and see their name). It works with Disguise, too—moving your cursor over someone who is disguised will show the correct disguised name. You can turn this option off from the "Controls" menu.
- A voting system. Players can now vote to restart the server, kick an abusive player, ban an abusive player, and change a map in progress. In order for this to work, use the following syntax from the console:  
vote restartserver  
vote kick <player> (example: vote

# NASCAR RACING 3

**Category:** Sierra

**Developer:** Driving Sim

**Need:** P166, 32MB, SVGA 2MB

**3D:** TCP/IP

**Multiplayer:** Direct 3D, 3DFX

■ The award-winning team that brought you the long running NASCAR Racing series of simulations has done it again. NASCAR Racing 3 includes 45 of your favourite Winston Cup and Busch Grand National drivers competing on 28 tracks, including the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, all updated to reflect the 1999 season. Only the two tracks (New Hampshire International Speedway and Texas Motor Speedway) will work with this demo version.



realised that their races were in danger, and decided to form a mystical Crown of Peace that would enable them to battle the demon together. As centuries passed, the four tribes gradually forgot their alliance, which allowed the demon to return to the land and once again threaten their survival by spreading famine, plague, and warfare. Faced with certain ruin, heroes from each of the four clans were sent to conquer the demon, collect the Crown of Peace, and save their land from complete destruction

through the toughest games against the toughest rivals in 20 spectacular arenas against the best STARS in the land in the quest for the Premier League trophy. Win games, earn stars and improve your team's players in ten important footballing skills such as passing, shooting and tackling. Alternatively, use the stars to buy new players.

## FA Premier League Stars

**Developer:** EA Sports

**Category:** Sport

**Need:** P166, 32MB, SVGA 2MB

**3D:** Direct 3D, 3DFX

**Multiplayer:** IPX 4 Player, Modem, Serial

■ Take your Premier League team through 38 games in 10 months

## Gromada

**Developer:** Buka

**Category:** Shoot'em up

**Need:** P166, 16MB, SVGA,

**3D:** Direct 3D, 3DFX

**Multiplayer:** IPX, Modem

■ Mysterious alien forces came to destroy your planet. Somehow they got control over all battle machines on GROMADA. The only one they could not get hold of was Cassandra, your favourite creation, superb tank with unlimited battle capabilities. This fast-paced, top-down action



Mini Golf Master: Miniverse

game pits players against planet-invading aliens in a nonlinear campaign. The players have customisable tanks with a variety of weaponry at their

disposal. Thanks to its skill settings and customised mission difficulty, Gromada will appeal to gamers of all ages and skill levels.



# HALF-LIFE ADDON SPECIAL

**Category:** Action

**Developer:** Sierra Studios

**Need:** ???

**3D:** >????

**Multiplayer:** ????

■ 39 single-player missions including a complete addon pack containing three new episodes! Also includes the best multiplayer mods - Cold Ice, Counterstrike, Deathmatch plus, Ghost, Jailbreak, Oz Deathmatch, Phineas Bot, Science and Industry



**Mini Golf Master: Miniverse**

**Developer:** no2 Games  
**Category:** Golf  
**Need:** P166, 32MB, SVGA  
**3D:** N/A  
**Multiplayer:** N/A

■ **MiniGolf Master:** Miniverse is arcade-style miniature golf featuring an isometric user perspective, 3D rendered scrolling playfields, and an advanced physics engine. The planets of Miniverse have been terraformed into challenging courses (and

five star resorts) to provide addictive stroke play and ruthless croquet-style deathmatches.

**Natural Fawn Killers**

**Developer:** Fiendish  
**Category:** Games  
 Sports - Hunting  
**Need:** P166, 16MB, SVGA  
**3D:** Direct 3D  
**Multiplayer:** N/A

■ **Never fear, you are safe** from Woody Harrelson's acting in this game. Natural Fawn Killers takes

the Deer Hunter theme into seriously over the top situations, by upping the hardware used and getting rid of the serious aspect of the wildlife hunting simulation. This plays more like a basic firstperson shooter than anything that would require you to care about the wind direction or where you've seen some broken branches. The action is a lot more immediate, with plenty of helpless animals wandering around ready to be turned into trophies.

**Disc 1****Patches****Half-Life Patches**

10051013.EXE - Upgrades retail version (1.0.0.5) to version 1.0.1.3.  
 10091013.EXE - Upgrades version 1.0.0.9 to version 1.0.1.3.  
 10101013.EXE - Upgrades version 1.0.1.0 to version 1.0.1.3.

**PATCHES**

kick TheAmazingFoodMan)  
 vote kickban <player> (example: vote kickban Badaxe)  
 vote open <map> (example: vote open arena\_02)  
 - New log statements for players joining a team, leaving a team, and restarting the game, in order to better present the information to server administrators.  
 - A "Net Speed" menu option in the "Player Config" section of the "Multiplayer" menu. There are three settings: "Internet" (for 28.8 to 56K modem users), "Fast Internet" (for ISDN and cable modem users), and "LAN" (for DSL or faster connections)  
 - In addition, there are several fixes for existing problems with the commercial release of The Wheel of Time:  
 - The number of seals will stay constant. This fixes a bug where players could create extra seals in citadel mode.  
 - Inactive citadel servers (servers with no players that have been idle for an extended period of time after a game has started) will now restart.  
 - Spectators are now forced onto a team after 15 seconds of the start of a multiplayer game. This fixes the problem of spectators being mistaken for players during the game.  
 - Icons on the scoreboard will now display the proper background color (according to skin) for each player.  
 - The tracer ter'angreal will now find seals wherever they are in the level. If a seal is well-hidden by terrain, etc in the level, the tracer will sometimes go through the obstacle to reach the seal.  
 - Spaces in player names will now be changed to underscores. This fixes the problem of multi-worded player names being cut off after the first word.  
 - Machin Shin and the Light Sphere ter'angreal will now function properly in multiplayer. No official maps use either of these things yet.  
 - Spirit shield will now cancel Swap Places.  
 - All previous Direct3D enhancements and fixes have been included.  
 - A previous patch that fixed a copy protection problem with launching multiplayer servers has been included.  
 - The Wheel of Time servers no longer report their existence to Epic's master server.  
 - The FString::Parse / appStrfind crash has been fixed.  
 - Players can no longer hold the Shift key to stay suspended in midair after shifting.  
 - The Home and Grey Plus keys are now rebound to the "flush" command. If your system uses a Direct3D accelerator card, you may notice gradual performance degradation in certain areas of the game. In these cases, the "flush" command can improve performance dramatically.  
 - Legion's projectiles will now lose acquisition upon the target's death.

**DISC 2**

**Category:** Eidos Interactive  
**Developer:** Action  
**Need:** P233, 32MB, SVGA  
**3D:** Direct 3D  
**Multiplayer:** TCP/IP, IPX

■ **Thief II: The Metal Age** rejoins Garrett in the shadowy sequel of the action adventure game. Think of Thief 2 as a "first person sneaker." Sure, you can use your sword and bow to kill your enemies, but the general rule of engagement in Thief 2 is: "The enemy should never know you were there." As a master thief, you have the ability to become practically invisible while in shadows. If an enemy is otherwise ignorant of your

presence, he can pass quite close to you without seeing you, as long as you are in the shadows. There is a "visibility gem" at the bottom of the screen that indicates how visible you are to your enemies. You will learn techniques such as crouching, walking instead of running, not drawing weapons, avoiding noisy surfaces and finding the best hiding spots in order to completely obfuscate your enemies. You can also make your own areas of darkness by using water arrows to extinguish torches. You also possess several special tools and abilities available to the master thief. You are a great

pickpocket and can often steal a key, pouch, or potion from passing characters. They must be unaware of you for pickpocketing to succeed, so the best thing to do is to hide in a shadow and wait for one to pass by. You also have a set of lockpicks that can open a variety of doors. Use all of these talents properly and you will procure riches enough to be a successful rogue.

**Keys**

**Esc** Calls up main menu  
**1-9** readies weapon  
**Backspace** clears any selected item  
**Tab** cycles through your inventory  
**q** lean left

**w** run  
**e** lean right  
**r** drop item (makes less noise than throwing it)  
**a** turn left  
**s** walk  
**d** turn right  
**f** toggles crouch  
**z** side step left  
**x** backpedal  
**c** side step right  
**v** center view  
**b** use your sword to block an enemy's attack  
**space bar** jump  
**m** call up map

**2 button mouse**

**button 1** use weapon  
**button 2** use item

**3 button mouse**

**button 1** use weapon  
**button 2** use item  
**button 3** block sword hit



# PC GAMEGUIDE

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live your gaming lifestyle to the fullest. Live your life the

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Expert Pool

### AMA Superbike

**Developer:** Motorsims

**Category:** Driving Sim

**Need:** P200, 32MB, SVGA 2MB

**3D:** Direct 3D

**Multiplayer:** TCP/IP, IPX

■ Motorsims and AMA Pro Racing have joined forces to create a whole new world of Superbike racing. AMA Superbike brings the thrill and competition of motorcycle racing to life on your PC with realistic, state-of-the-art sensory graphics that make you a part of a virtual community. Motorsims consulted racing experts to develop AMA Superbike. The program is designed to accurately model and render the Superbike racing experience. State-of-the-art graphics tools and a 10 Degrees of Freedom physics model allow for a full-on sensory thrill and a game that actually responds and delivers to each user's sense of speed and point of view. The tracks are handcrafted from actual blueprints utilising new texture techniques that allow for a highly detailed experience, even when you're up close and personal with the pavement.

### Expert Pool

**Category:** Sports



Ford Racing

**Developer:** Psygnosis

**Need:** P166, 32MB, SVGA

**3D:** Direct 3D

**Multiplayer:** TCP/IP, IPX, Modem

■ Developed by a team of physicists and professional pool players, Expert Pool brings the game to life with the highest degree of accuracy. Balls roll, skid, collide and move on a fully-rendered, 3D controlled pool table that mirrors reality. It has features that let you actually "walk" around the pool table to check out your next shot, take a closer look, back away, look left or right and then line-up the shot like you would in a real game with a real table. You can also take an overhead view from above.

### Ford Racing

**Category:** Driving Sim

**Developer:** Empire Interactive

**Need:** P200, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card

**3D:** Direct 3D

**Multiplayer:** N/A

■ Ford Racing's features a dozen of Ford Motor Company's finest vehicles from its European and American ranges, several of which (including the 'Rapid Fit Mondeo') are reproduced in full race

## NERF ARENA

**Category:** Firstperson Shooter

**Developer:** Hasbro Interactive

**Need:** P200, 32MB, W95/98

**3D:** N/A

**Multiplayer:** TCP/IP

■ Nerf Arena is an entirely new 3D universe with bright, colourful levels and three cool ways to play: PointBlast, BallBlast and SpeedBlast. In PointBlast, you use big, bad Nerf blasters to power your way past your opponents. Blast them and score big points. BallBlast is a virtual scavenger hunt. You must find several brightly coloured Nerf balls and blast them into targets. SpeedBlast is a good old-fashioned race, but with Nerf blasters that you can use to slow down your opponents. But watch out, because your opponents are armed and out to get you, too!



livery. Such is the attention that has been lavished on the vehicles re-produced in the game that more than 1-million pixels are used to define each one, in breathtaking detail. Just as importantly the game's physics engine provides not only for authentic modelling of the vehicles' suspension and drive-train characteristics, but also for the convincing collision dynamics expected by today's discerning gamer.

## Disc 2 Utilities

Adobe GoLive!  
Cute FTP  
Gamespy  
ICQ  
KALI  
mIRC  
Paintshop Pro 6.0  
Powerstrip  
Shell Picture  
Evidence Eliminator

## Patches

Age Of Wonders v1.31  
Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun v1.17a  
Jagged Alliance 2 v1.06  
Nocturne update  
Planescape: Torment v1.1  
Quake 3 point release  
Rogue Spear UK version  
Septerra Core 1.01  
SWAT 3 v1.1  
Tomb Raider 4 Revelation Patch  
Ultima 9 v1.18F  
Unreal Tournament v405b  
Wheel of Time 333 patch

## PATCHES

- NPCs will now lose acquisition upon the target's death.
- Players can no longer freeze corpses.
- The Fork ter'angreal now lasts twice as long.
- The Sever ter'angreal now uses charges 50% more slowly.
- The Sever ter'angreal is now only stopped by spirit, earth, and water shield.
- Seeking projectiles that lose acquisition will no longer explode when they hit a player (or NPC).
- They will continue to float until they strike something in the environment, where they will explode or expire.
- If a client wants to join a server that is running a map the client does not have, the client will now automatically download the map.
- Non-English versions of the game are unable to access the "Advanced Options" menu. All advanced changes should be made directly to the .INI files.
- If you have a card with the S3 Savage 4 chipset and are experiencing rendering problems, change the "Detail Textures" option in the "Hardware" menu to off. This will fix almost all of the rendering problems in the game. However, we were unable to fix the rendering problem in Mission\_08c (The Ways, Part II). Please contact your graphics card vendor for updated drivers.
- If you are using Direct3D and The Wheel of Time did not automatically detect Direct3D when you first installed (so you had to manually select it), you should change your video driver to Direct3D again after installing this patch. This will allow the game to optimize its settings for your video card. To reset your Direct3D driver, select the "Change Video Mode" option from TheWheel of Time's Program Group.

### SWAT 3: Close Quarters Battle v1.1 Patch

General Game Fixes:  
Mission R (storm drains) now ends correctly - if you disable only 1 bomb, you fail (always did), but now you won't get a medal for it the original fix for the above (in some localized versions) caused you to ALWAYS fail the mission; this has been fixed as well. Mission X (penthouse) now ends correctly - If President Stomas is killed, you are no longer able to play Mission S (city hall); this was confusing people since once Stomas dies your career is lost, even if you complete the objectives for Mission S. Edit boxes / console / anywhere else you can type are fully operational again (this was broken during localization)  
AI Fixes:  
When officers placed in Cover, they will not wander around and will only leave cover if an officer goes down. When officers finish clearing a room, they will not leave that room unless it is to return to the area they entered the room from.

## DELTA FORCE 2

**Developer:** Novalogic

**Category:** Firstperson Shooter

**Need:** P200, 32MB, SVGA

**3D:** Direct 3D

**Multiplayer:** TCP/IP, IPX



■ As in the original version, in Delta Force 2 you're a member of the U.S. military's elite antiterrorist detachment, Delta Force. This is a firstperson action game based on real-world conflicts. You use real-world weapons and tactics to capture terrorist bases, rescue hostages, and destroy enemy structures and weapons. Delta Force 2 improves on the original in almost every area. It sports enhanced graphics for smoother-looking terrain and convincing weather effects. It adds new weapons, a more cohesive, story-driven campaign, and more realistic ballistics. It also has improved multiplayer support and better control.



# ULTIMATE 3D GAMES

From the makers of **PC** PowerPlay

ON  
SALE NOW

ENORMOUS GUIDE!

## QUAKE III ARENA

Strategies, bots, secrets,  
moves, weapons and more!

## UNREAL TOURNAMENT

Level guides, items,  
weapons, tactics, set-up





# IMPERIUM GALACTICA II



**Category:** Realtime Strategy  
**Developer:** GT Interactive  
**Need:** P2-233, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card  
**3D:** Direct 3D  
**Multiplayer:** TCP/IP - 6

■ This is the ultimate space empire-building game. With research, production, unit design, colony management, realtime space and ground battles, starmap navigation, trading, diplomacy, spying and intelligence, Imperium Galactica II is a multi-layered, immersive gaming experience. Set in the 26th century, ruling military powers have taken a super-human race created by genetic scientists and turned them into the ultimate killing machines, but not before a rebel scientist sends indestructible memory crystals with all of their research on them to random points of the galaxy. It up to you to find the crystals to ensure a swift conquest of the universe

## Keys GLOBAL

**F1** Help!  
**F2** Starmap  
**F3** Colony

**F4** Research  
**F5** Design  
**F6** Diplomacy  
**F7** Spying  
**F8** Trade  
**F9** Info  
**F10** Messages  
**SHIFT+F12** Make a screenshot  
**O/ESCAPE** Options  
**Space** Time Freeze  
**1** Slow time  
**2** Normal time  
**3** Fast time

## STARMAP/COLONY

**Left/Right arrows** Rotate starmap  
**Up/Down arrows** Tilt starmap  
**+/-** Zoom in/out  
**Page up/down** Switch between your colonies  
**Shift page up/down** Switch between all known planets  
**ALT+Rightclick** Forced move  
**CRTL+Right click** Forced attack  
**SHIFT+Right click** Set waypoints

## SPACE BATTLES

**+/-** Zoom in/out  
**Hold both mouse buttons** Rotate camera  
**Hold right mouse button** Select height  
**I** Ship info  
**G** Grid on/off  
**CRTL 1-9** Select team



## Gearheads Garage

**Developer:** Medaka  
**Category:** Driving Sim  
**Need:** 486 DX166, 32MB, SVGA  
**3D:** N/A  
**Multiplayer:** N/A

■ A game where car lovers can repair and customise late model cars and trucks. Working from their virtual garage, players use power tools to repair their cars to top condition. They can even paint them with a virtual paint can, or apply catalogue-bought decals anywhere on the body. And for more personality, custom parts are available for every car in the game!

## Gorky 17

**Developer:** Monolith  
**Category:** Roleplaying  
**Need:** P200, 32MB, SVGA  
**3D:** Direct 3D  
**Multiplayer:** N/A

■ You command elite government soldiers on a fact finding mission to an abandoned Russian spy-training facility named Gorky 17. The press has leaked unsubstantiated reports of grisly abominations perpetrated by berserk hybrid creatures. These are completely unfounded claims that will be swiftly disproved as you command your men to root out the source of this campaign of misinformation.

## Sid Meier's Antietam!

**Developer:** Firaxis  
**Category:** Realtime Strategy  
**Need:** P133, 32MB, SVGA  
**3D:** N/A  
**Multiplayer:** N/A

■ Sid Meier's Antietam! is the follow-up to Sid Meier's Gettysburg!, one of the most successful Civil War computer games ever. Based on Gettysburg's award-winning realtime tactical

battle system, Sid Meier's Antietam puts you on a historically detailed, 3D battlefield commanding animated Union or Confederate troops, as you relive the excitement, drama, and action of America's bloodiest day.



# PATCHES

Officers are more responsive to suspects. Less stuttering should be encountered due to AI delays. (Smoother frame rate)  
 If player is using a 1911, MP5, or MP5SD and switches ammo, any officer with one of those 3 weapons will also switch to that ammo. Officers performing Mirror and Bang actions are less exposed to enemy fire.  
 The number of times you can shoot an officer before the officers consider you a rogue cop have been increased. The settings for suspect attributes on Hard and Easy have been fixed (some settings made hard easier and vice versa).

## Rogue Spear v2.05 Patch

All fixes/changes in the 2.04 patch  
 The special keyboard keys (arrow keys, numeric keypad, etc.) can once again be remapped under non-English versions of Windows. Rogue Spear should now run under Windows2000. GameSpy support has been added. As part of this, the behavior of the "Announce Server" option has changed. If this option is checked, your game info is broadcast to the GameSpy master server.  
 The server will no longer pause until the armpatch timeout has expired while waiting for clients who have armpatches turned off. Support has been added for users with multiple network connections to choose which connection to use for a multiplayer game.  
 The problems with the "Lock Teams" option should be cleared up. The blank dialog that a client received when joining a full game should now display the proper message.  
 Clients who disconnect during the loading sequence will no longer crash if they reconnect while the game is still in progress or in the results screen.  
 The armpatch timeout was reduced to 30 seconds meaning laggy clients will not delay multiplayer game starts for more than that period of time.  
 Clients that disconnect during the loading sequence will no longer delay the game start until the armpatch timeout has expired. Clients who disconnect and rejoin before a game starts will no longer delay the server until the armpatch timeout has expired. Hitting escape during a multiplayer loading sequence will no longer cause a hang or crash.

## PLUS

Septerra Core  
 Jagged Alliance 2  
 Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation



# IN-BOX

Letters Tip #8: If you can spell, the likelihood of publication rises. Kewl, huh?

WRITE TO: PC PowerPlay Letters, Level 6, 418A Elizabeth St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010. [letters@pcpowerplay.next.com.au](mailto:letters@pcpowerplay.next.com.au)

## Reader Impresses With Research

In response to the letter by Grant Steele in Issue 45 of your fabulous magazine, which I have been reading since Issue 7 and subscribed to since Issue 8, I would like to say that he's being a bit petty going on about a measly \$1 increase in price - and saying that it will cause more piracy. I think not. The mag was \$8.95 till Issue 43, which is a long time. I have been doing some research on subscription prices, well here goes:

Issue 7: (11 Issues) \$74.95

Issue 11: (6 Issues) \$39.95  
(12 Issues) \$69.95

Issue 26: (12 Issues) \$69.95  
(24 Issues) \$124.50

Issue 41: (12 Issues) \$76.95

Issue 43: (12 Issues) \$79.95 Same as 4 issues free  
(24 Issues) \$139.95 Same as 10 issues free

Oh no! The price has gone down then up, but by subscribing I get 4 issues free, I get the mag a week before the newsagents, it comes straight to my letter box! Also over the years I have won Rally Championship, Rama, Discworld II and in Issue 45, Driver. Well that's nearly paid off my subscription hasn't it? Anyway keep up the good work and keep those comps running.

**Paul Blackmore, Email**

*We're always impressed by people who do research. It makes us feel better.*

## Subscriptions Manager Pretends to be Reader.

I don't think you have the right to whinge about the price of PC PowerPlay, if you didn't realise they have had the same price since the first issue almost 4 years ago so the price has to go up some time doesn't it? PC PowerPlay just keeps getting better and better, the price of other

## Byte Size

What's the point of writing a Byte Size?

**Luke Willis, Email.**

*And what's the point of answering?*

products like bread and butter go up all the time. I think PC PowerPlay has the right to increase the price sometimes (not too often though). Ever heard of a subscription?

**Warren Crawford, Email**

*Actually, Warren is a real live reader. We think.*

## A True Gamer Writes In

Heya guys.

PCPP has kicked arse since the day I bought Issue #4. I have however, (you knew this was coming I bet), one problem, which seems to have come through more strongly lately. That is the age old question "What is a true gamer?" Now this letter is referring mainly to Issue #44. You listed the top 50 games of all time and

## Byte Size

With all the new graphics technology, we can make games look close to reality. So where is it? The missing link in FPS games. Where are my FEET! Look down - "Nice Floor!". Look Forward - "Hey I got a nice big gun, Hmm Nice!"

**Walt Disney, Email**

*Good to see Walt defrosted and not afraid to ask the big questions. Have any companies thought about endorsements in this area?*



## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### Brand Spanking New Features

Dear PowerPlay,

I have noticed some recent trends with your reviews that are a little concerning to me. It appears to me that when a new game comes out for review that you mark it down because it 'doesn't add anything new to the genre'. It appears to me that you are looking for a new and totally immersive, life-changing experience with every new software title. This just isn't going to happen due to technology constraints and game development time. To me, a computer game is there for a quick fix of enjoyment when the wife's away - I don't expect it to change my life and have other things to think about during the day rather than how to better storm the beach in UT (a fav level of mine). I also find the difficulty of the end game levels of some of the better 3D shooters (Half Life, for example) to be incredibly hard to the point of impossible without cheat codes,

which I dislike immensely. Perhaps this is why I enjoy playing sports games more - in order to learn the game I play as the strongest side against the CPU as the weakest, and build from there. I suppose what I am trying to say is that I love computer games, absolutely adore them, but they have their own place in my life, as does everything else. Addictive games, such as the Delta Force series, don't add anything new to the genre, but that doesn't stop me from buying them and playing them and loving them. I suppose in fairness, if I was playing and reviewing games every day, I would tend to lose sight of the standard setup for them. In all honesty, I couldn't do your job.

One quick bouquet to your support staff. If my mag arrives without a CD or a tear courtesy of Oz Post, then one quick call and it is replaced. Very impressive service and a credit to you all.

Kind Regards,  
**Kip, Email**

PS - Rally Championship 2000 and FIFA 2000 really did deserve a Gold Award. I actually use FIFA 2000 to help with my over 30s soccer play on weekends, although I'll have to work on my bicycle kicks.

Thanks for your letter and I'm glad you enjoy the mag. The main thrust of your email is something that can't really be well answered in the short space of time I have here. However I think you could see the whole 'adding to the genre' very clearly with the examples of Sin and Half-life. Both are FPSs, but Half-Life transcended this notion to create a truly superb game. Sin was more of a stock-standard FPS (and was rife with bugs - separate matter). As such, Half-Life performed much better. That said, some developers just set out to do a game, and do it well. There is a fine line, and I hope that we haven't emphasised it too heavily. And I've passed on your thanks to the support staff. Thanks for being so courteous, they really appreciate it.



## Byte Size

Hey guys! I recently purchased a Voodoo 3 2000 AGP and... oh that's all, just wanted to brag...

**Paul Apthorpe, Email**

*Hey Paul! Well we recently got a .... Oh, no we didn't. Guess you've got us there.*

stated that "If you haven't played them all, then you're not a real gamer." I strongly object to that statement.

I have not played all of those games. I don't like flight sims, or driving games, my computer never could run anything like Half-Life, Harpoon would put me to sleep, and Descent 2 was one of the shit-est games I have ever played. So does this mean I'm not a true gamer?! NO! I am a true gamer because I enjoy playing games and get a lot out of them, not because I have or have not played so called "great games". Now if you'll excuse me, this true gamer has some gaming to do. A true classic, the original Team Fortress, awaits.

**=TC=](ing-Nothing**

*If you're happy, we're happy. And you seem happy.*

## 'The List' Joke Goes Too Far

Browsing in the local computer store just recently, I stumbled upon a game which I was sure would quickly become a definingly popular genre-hybrid, setting new highs for game developers to strive towards: Shadow of the Shadow. Set in a dizzying array of vibrant black, Shadow of the Shadow combines the best elements from 1st person shooters in the dark, and elegantly meshes them with the intrigues of adventure gaming in the dark. However, after reading the PCPP #46 review of the game, and its score of only 77%, I was appalled. How could any game that so vividly recreates the random stumblings of an individual into solid objects score less than an 85%? I must say PCPP, I had come to expect more.

**Malcontented Lemming, Email**

*When we reviewed the aforementioned game, we concluded that it was 'no Extreme Lawn Bowls 2000, but could prove popular in the in-joke market'*

## Byte Size

I have an idea for you guys at PCPP. Why don't you get a PCPP webpage? After all your magazine is DA BEST and your webpage should be good too. It'll be great don't you think?

Your number one PCPP mag fan,

**JOD.S, Email**

*Jod, you're some kind of mind-reader. Check-out [www.pcpowerplay.com.au](http://www.pcpowerplay.com.au) for some good gaming lovin'. Oh and please, it's da BOMB baby, unless you're whack.*

Lucy almost dodged Slash's rocket  
Quake 3 Arena



## Publishing Science 101

I have been reading your mag and I feel that it is my duty to point out a few facts.

1. When you review games, you have a yellow bar on the top of the page. In it, you have the 'need' and 'want' requirement for the game. If Quake 3 has the minimum requirements of a P266, then why the @#\$% do you say it wants a P3 600? With 600MB of HDD space? I mean get real!

2. Why do we always get our mags a month before the month it's meant to come out? I have had my February issue for 2 weeks now, and it's only the 24th of January! All the articles are outdated by the time February comes!

3. In your 'February' issue on p22, you mention that you will include all the games that are going to be released by the end of the year, including the upcoming Xmas releases. Are you speaking like it was December last year, or do you expect us to vote for games we have never played? I will stop here.

**Thank you, Dean, Email**

1. When we review games, the yellow bar on the top of the page is what it would be good to have. The Q3A

## Byte Size

You asked about spelling errors in games... I looked at PCPP 45 and noticed that you had to many half naked Quake 3 chicks.

**John Bailey, e-mail**

*I have no idea how to answer this. March? David?*

one was probably a little outside the realms of normalcy.

2. A vast majority of magazines do 'future dating'. In January we release the Feb edition, in Feb we release the March edition, and so on. It's basically so that if people walk into a newsagent, they say "Hey, it's currently Jan 23rd and this is the Feb issue - it must be brand new". The only reason that we do it is that our competitors do it. If it was Jan 23rd and you had to choose between a mag with 'Jan' or 'Feb' on the cover, you'd go with Feb everytime. Check out some of the women's mags. They used to be so far ahead of themselves that they were getting towards two months in front.

3. Common sense buddy.

Team Fortress 2



Shadow of the Shadow





GoldenEye - well, the Half-life mod version anyway



### Freaky Weirdo Who Scares Us

Could you please tell me who writes the captions for the screenshots in your mag so I can follow them home and hide in their bouganvilleas and watch them prepare generic brand 2 minute noodles at 3am. Then I will steal the hubcaps off their Datsun 180B and make them into a ceremonial headdress for use in the temple dedicated to them under my bed. They are a genius, whoever they may be.

**Phil the guava fancier, Email**

*This is why I got into publishing - the fame and glamour. In answer to your question, the PCPP captions are written by the Full Bench of the High Court of Australia.*

### Mr Attentive Says Hello

I checked out your Top 50 recently (2 games with the "BEST INTRO EVER" (Mech 2, I-War)... hmmm, defeats the purpose of having BEST EVER's doesn't it.

**Greg Johnson, Roma QLD**

*You have a very keen memory to be able to tell this almost slip-up. But look more carefully at the two*

*entries... go and check now... and you'll see that Mechwarrior has '2nd' written above the 'best'. But, I'll admit, not very clearly. Glad you enjoyed the Top 50.*

### Bond is Not The Man

Greetings. Like many readers, a recent letter came to my attention concerning location damage. The letter said that the first game with locational damage was not on PC, but was the N64's GoldenEye. To relieve all fellow PC PowerPlayer's I did some research - determined to prove them otherwise. And so, I came up with the first games with locational damage. Firstly we had Mech Warrior 2 (with limb and torso damage), and secondly I have a early game from PC PowerPlay #2 or something, where you noted that "Finally we have a game that enemies get hurt where you hit them" - so there Mr/Ms 64 player, do your homework.

**Michael White, Email**

*Thank you for your historical perspective. Please wake us when the controversy is over.*

### Byte Size

I am glad to inform you that your mag is doing very well. So well that when I was in Singapore - out of the 5 different mags there - sitting in the middle was PC PowerPlay, so good for you.

**Micheal White, Email**

*New reader competition. Most obscure PCPP purchase point.*

### No Really, It's True

I just came across a site the other day called Whazzat?!, which documents grammatical errors, badly translated text and otherwise hilarious quotes from computer games. Seeing as there was a letter in your latest, prompting you to ask for readers to send in other similar errors, I thought I'd pass this on. Check out <http://classicgaming.com/whazzat/> it's really good for a laugh.

**Andrew Low, Email**

*"Here's a lockpick. It might be handy if you, the master of unlocking, take it with you."*

*-Barry - Resident Evil*

### Accolades For Farewelled Comrade

Well well well, Ben's vacating the premises. I must confess, (and I feel that I speak for the majority of PCPP's readers) that I actually felt a little forlorn at the news. Yes, Ben, strange as it may seem, we, the gamers, developed a fondness, a strange sort of kinship with you. We became interested in that piece of text at the start of the mag that is usually ignored... the editorial. We looked forward to seeing what weird pose Ben would employ for the photo in the next issue, what he would say... how he would react to the legions of butt kissers that line up each issue to salute the mag by planting kisses upon the collective butt of the PCPP team in the Letters section. And now... gone. Although we have faith that PCPP will always endure, and continue to produce a quality mag, we cannot help but spare a thought for the man who injected the mag with a little bit of his own twisted, incorrigible, ironic, and generally smart arse (and I mean that in a nice way... I think) personality. Farewell Ben, and good luck for the future.

**Hilander**

*P.S. If you guys need a new editor, just let me know.*

*Ah, no. Thanks though. Ben is now toiling on a new website. Unfortunately, not ours.*

### Byte Size

Isn't interesting how UNREAL Tournament is much closer to reality than Quake 3: Arena?

**Jack Banh, e-mail**

*I worry about your reality.*





# COMPETITIONS

## GALAXY QUEST

**10 COPIES OF IMPERIUM GALACTICA 2  
AND 10 DOUBLE-PASSES TO SEE 'GALAXY QUEST'.**



For years, the crew of the NSEA Protector set off on thrilling and often dangerous missions in space - then their series was canceled. Twenty years later, the five stars of the classic '70s TV series 'Galaxy Quest' are still in costume, making low-budget appearances at sci-fi conventions. But some of their fans are a little more far out than the actors could ever have imagined. A group of aliens who have mistakenly intercepted TV transmissions arrive at a convention and whisk Commander Taggart and his crew into space to help them in their all-too-real war against a deadly adversary. On top of double passes to 'Galaxy Quest', ten lucky readers will win a copy of Imperium Galactica 2, a PCPP Gold Award game. Utilising differing styles of war and peace, you will experience vicious battles to retain control of limited resources. Our spies tell us that cut-throat diplomacy and careful planning are the way to go.

**Q: From what novel did Sigourney Weaver get her stage name.**

## THE SIMS

**6 COPIES OF THE GAME**

You've built them rail-roads and roads - and now you get to build them lives. That's right, The Sims is the life-simulator from the kooky bastards at Maxis. As you can find out in our review, The Sims is one of the most engrossing and innovative titles we've played in years. You can affect almost anything about your sims life. Get a new job in the army, redecorate the house, hit on your foxy neighbour - it's all possible. You make the choices that define your sim - who their friends are, how they live their lives, everything. Liberate yourself from yourself - try The Sims.

**Q: In 50 words or less, what is the meaning of life?**



## SEPTERRA CORE

**5 COPIES OF THE GAME**

Septerra Core, a proudly made-in-the-USA game, has achieved something few people believed could be done - it uses the same anime RPG formula which made the Final Fantasy series such a hit, but does it better. With crazy action and evocative locations, it proves that you don't need a licence to give gamers what they want.

**Q: Septerra consists of how many worlds?**



### WHERE TO SEND

Write the answer, along with your name and address on the back of an envelope. Tip: Don't forget to put the competition name on the front of the envelope.

All entries close March 28th

Send to:

<competition name>

PC PowerPlay

78 Renwick St.

Redfern NSW, 2016

### ISSUE 45 WINNERS

**TERRATEC DMX SOUND CARD**

**Q. What does EAX stand for?**

A. Environmental Audio Extensions

B. Slater, Goolwa SA

### THE WHEEL OF TIME

**Q. Robert Jordan plans to finish the series after how many books?**

A. As many as it takes (although it's rumoured at 13)

A. Kennedy, Wallsend NSW

S. Timmers, Waverly TAS

D. Sinn, Red Cliffs VIC

M. Thomas, Seven Hills NSW

N. Fenner, Toowoomba QLD

J. Guerin, Brisbane QLD

### ULTIMA IX: ASCENSION

**Q. Name all the dungeons in the land of Britannia?**

A. The 8 dungeons are; Deceit, Despise, Destard, Wrong, Covetous, Shame, Hythloth and the Great Stygian Abyss.

R. Koger, Carnegie VIC

C. Cuming, Safety Bay WA

M. Carley, Christies Downs SA

G. Peck, Maryborough QLD

L. Russell, Charters Towers QLD

N. Yates, Townsville QLD

### MYSTERY MEN

**Q. Mystery Men star Paul Reubens is also known as who?**

A. Pee Wee Herman

L. De Barrios, Ashmore QLD

J. Cox, Glandore SA

L. Doughty, Kanahooka NSW

P. Atkin, Devon North VIC

A. Haynes, Grafton NSW

J. Bayshawe, Connolly WA



# DVD



This trippy second film from Doug 'Swingers' Liman was one of last years cinema highlights. With a hot cast and a funkin' soundtrack, this will be this months hottest DVD, for sure. The Pulp Fiction-esque techniques - multiple story threads and playing with timeframes - are evident, but work to give Go a fresh feel.



One of the best films of the 90's (and - I'll admit - our editors favourite ever) this cops and robbers epic has transferred superbly to DVD. Featuring power-house performances from a phenomenal cast - DeNiro, Pacino, Voight, Sizemore, Portman and many more - it will blow you away. The sweeping vista's of L.A. should only ever be seen in wide-screen, and the extra features, whilst minimal, make this a must-have title.



Skippping cinemas last year, this shlock-horror flick is not with-out merit. Taking a cue from the Duke Nukem-inspiring movie 'Evil Dead', you can once again see someones hand gain a life of it's own. All the obvious 'hand jokes' aside, Idle Hands is still entertaining, and features the always-cool of Seth Green (Buffy, Austin Powers, etc)



Set in upper-class New York, this movie is probably best known as an update of Dangerous Liaison's - itself a dramatisation of the original French novel. Under-rated, this slick and hilarious drama really does cut through you in parts - thanks to the phenomenal talents of real-life couple Ryan Phillippe and Reese Witherspoon.



# Squatter

For the uninitiated, Squatter is the classic Australian board game based on the world of sheep farming. Players take turns traversing a game board, which is remarkably similar to that of Monopoly. At the start of each game, all players must choose a sheep station on which they wish to play, with the winner being the first player to cultivate and fully stock their station. Each circuit of the board represents one year in the sheep farming calendar and as the game progresses, players must buy, sell and shear sheep whilst trying to fight bush fires, survive droughts and basically deal with all the hardships and triumphs of the honest Aussie sheep farmer.

Tru Blue software, recknown for games with that distinctly down-under flavour, have lovingly recreated Squatter in a true multimedia format. Every location on the game board now offers a unique multimedia animation, be it a blazing sun over a dry mud bed represented by landing on a drought square, to images of pesticide or fire trucks for those unexpected costs.

Without a doubt, Squatter will have you singing "Clip go the shears boy, clip, clip, clip!"

**You've got to respect a game that features dead rabbits. Or you can just laugh.**

# ERICSSON FM RADIO HANDS FREE



Adding to the growing range of 'things to plug into your mobile phone' comes the Ericsson FM Radio Hands Free accessory. While it doesn't have a catchy name like the Chatboard, it is a cool little feature for those with a mobile. Plugging into the base of your Ericsson, crisp FM sound plays through your headphones - muting when there's an incoming call. While the design leaves a little to be desired (the screen displays no

information about frequencies or volume) it is a nifty little gadget for those who use their phone frequently. The FM Radio Hands Free retails for RRP \$95 nationally.



With Messiah delayed yet again (it's coming next month, honestly!), Interplay sent us a trio of Bob stauettes. However, the painful transition from tessellated polygons to solid metal seemsto have left a nasty scowl on his face. Though the figurines now adorn our computers, we still prefer our Bob to be cute.



# Millennium Mantra



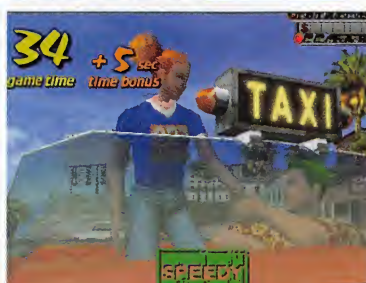
How can I improve my existence? Do I have the internal aura of light that can improve the world? Is there a piece of software that will let me upload my energy to the internet? Finally, there is a title that answers these pressing questions (especially the last one). Millennium Mantra is a series of hypnotic, non-violent 'games' focused around concentration and relaxation. There are 144 levels of relaxing, but occasionally taxing, fun to be had - in an environment of serene calm. Gaining points, or 'chi', you will soon be at one with yourself and your puta. New age tunes flow peacefully, and thoughtful reflections are beamed onto screen at regular

intervals. All of this has a purpose though. Each person who plays MM is part of a collective called (what else) The We. You can upload your points to a website called TheAll.com. There, the energy will accumulate until next New Years Eve. Apparently, if we can get six billion points (one for every person on the planet) The All will release the Millennium Mantra, sending a wave of positive energy around the world. Otherwise - we're screwed. Non-denominational, and available for use by all ages, Millennium Mantra is, at the very least, trying to save our souls.

## GAMES WE'D LOVE TO SEE ON PC

### Crazy Taxi (Arcade, DC)

We just can't help fooling with this game - it's as addictive as chicken-salted chips. Your mission is to pick up passengers and take them to their destination. Simple? Not in this town. As you race down the wrong side of the road, hitting cable-cars, scattering pedestrians and jumping up stairs you might be re-thinking your initial impressions. What first grabbed our eye was the slick graphics of CT - smoother and faster than any arcade game we've seen. But it's the city that will make you blink. Apart from being huge, it's teeming with life at every turn. The highways and roads are packed with cars, trucks, bikes and people. It makes driving through Midtown Madness feel like a freeway at 4AM on a Sunday. And the controls are as simple as they come. Drive and reverse. Accelerate and brake. That's it. Hook in to Crazy Taxi at most arcades around the country, or get it on that Dreamcast console thing.



Rastafarian taxi drivers abound in CT.



## CD

KEN ISHII  
SLEEPING MADNESS  
(R&S RECORDS)

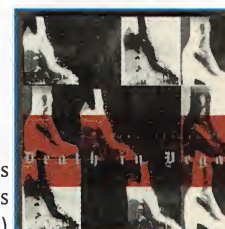


One of Japan's premier exponents of electronica returns with an eclectic excursion through drum 'n' bass, techno, and the occasional indulgent moment of new age twittering. Such schizophrenic behaviour is appropriate, of course, this being music made to move the mind more than the feet. Far from a cure for insomnia, Sleeping Madness is nevertheless the perfect album to drift away with.



REGULAR FRIES  
ACCEPT THE SIGNAL  
(JUNIOR BOYS' OWN)

The louche, swaggering, low-slung grooves of the London-based collective Regular Fries immediately marks them down as the spiritual successor to the Happy Mondays. Much more than dance music with a rock attitude, Regular Fries are concerned with bringing such genre barriers crashing down. Which is cool with us.



DEATH IN VEGAS  
THE CONTINO SESSIONS  
(DECONSTRUCTION)

In which accomplished DJs Death In Vegas invite friends and sonic inspirations such as Dot Allison, Iggy Pop, Primal Scream's Bobby Gillespie and Jim Reid of the Jesus & Mary Chain to drop by the studio and hang out. The Contino Sessions is the infectious, mesmerising result, all mantra-like beats and adventures in stereo.



FINAL FANTASY VIII  
NOBUO UEMATSU

The musical score of the Final Fantasy series has always been exceptional, though until now we've had to endure the somewhat lacking guise of the MIDI standard. This CD is just what you've always wanted - 120 minutes of poetic music from the eighth game in the series, and fully-orchestrated at that.



## GAME ENDORSEMENTS WE'D LIKE TO SEE

We here at PCPP live and breathe games. We all have Quake posters on the wall, soundtracks to epic roleplaying games in our discmans and tattoos of buxom fighting game characters on our nether regions. Some may call us sad, we prefer to think of ourselves as dedicated. However, there is still plenty of game-related merchandise that we haven't yet seen. So here's a list of our most wanted:

### The John Romero Personal Organiser

Now you can be as punctual as John Romero - every day of your life!

The unique Romero to realtime converter ensures that you'll never keep an appointment again. Five minutes of Romero time equates to 57 hours in realtime, so when you say your next project will be ready by Tuesday, your boss will be wondering which month you're referring to. Includes a countdown to when Daikatana will be released.\*

\*Rounded to the nearest decade.

### Ultima Online Street Directory

Explore the unknown worlds awaiting you outside your front door with the UO UBD. Using the

detailed maps contained within this weighty tome, you can experience the feeling of sunlight and engage your neighbours in conversations that don't include words like "LOL" and "Read the FAQ". The Dragon Deluxe edition even includes a comprehensive journal to provide hints for quests like "buying a litre of milk", "getting a haircut" and "taking a trip to the laundry".

### The Kingpin Golden Book series

Now the littlest member of the family can learn to read the E-Z way. With Kingpin the tiny tykes will be graduating in no time from such phrases as "Move yo ass \*\*\*\*\*!" and "\*\*\*\* you, you stinking \*\*\*\*!" to all-time favourites like "\*\*\*\* and

\*\*\*\*\* me, \*\*\*\*\*!" Your child will become the hit of the pre-school playground when they read the lovable tales of thugs shooting each other in the head. Remember, if it's Kingpin, it's love \*\*\*\*head.

Includes full colour pictures, mostly in red.

### EA Sports Illegal Drag Race 2000

All the thrills and spills of illegal street drag racing are in the latest release from EA Sports. From the guy with the hotted up Torana to the other guy with the hotted up Torana, all the cars and drivers are in here! Race on real life tracks like Lygon St, Carlton, the crowded street outside a 21st birthday party and the shopping car park at 3am.

Compete in the drag race knockout! Enter the burnout contest! Escape before the police arrive! Soundtrack by Cold Chisel and Psuedo Echo.

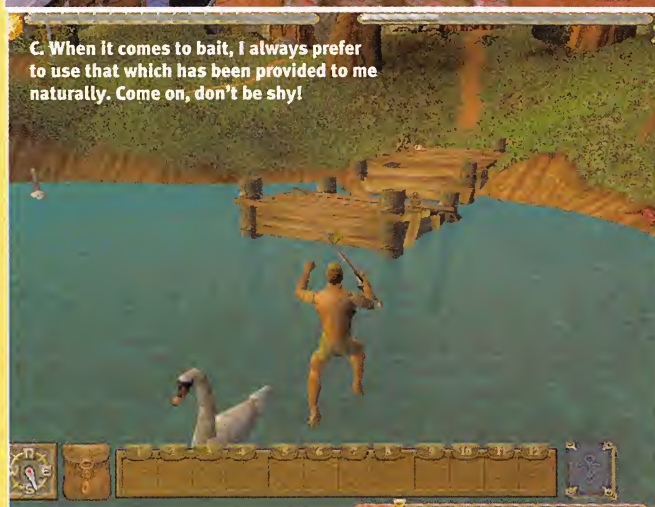
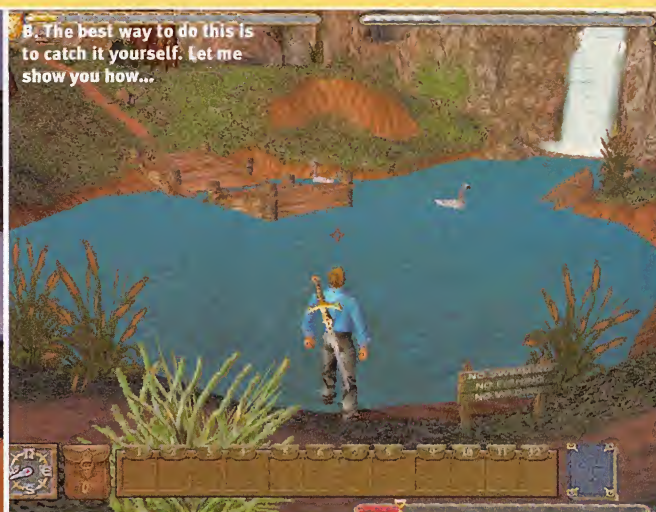
### The 2dfx 2D Accelerator

Make your 2D games fly with the latest 2D card from 2dfx. Featuring a new chip that gives you no lighting effects and minimal texture mapping, your games look flatter than ever before. With the sheer power to collapse at the merest sight of a polygon, this card brings you to all new levels of blockiness. Includes the hottest 2D games - Championship Manager 3, Rollercoaster Tycoon and FOUR World War II turn-based strategy titles.



## COOKING WITH THE AVATAR

### #2 Crustacean Capers





## THEODORE



"Oh, Rinoa, you can't have a headache every night!"

## ALTERNATIVE READING

Here is what we would have liked to have brought you this month...

REVIEWED

100 BEST LOOFAHS ✕ NO-SLIP SOAP DISHES ✕ SEA SPONGE ROUNDUP

PC BATHROOM TECHNOLOGY  
100% AUSTRALIAN

# PC ShowerPlay





# COMING IN **PC** PowerPlay

**PCPP #48 ON SALE APRIL 5, 2000**



## GRAND PRIX 3



**BEST RACING SIM EVER?  
WE TAKE GP3 FOR THE PCPP TESTDRIVE**





DOING TIME



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**INTENSE**  
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